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An Exploration of Knowledge Transfer and Career College Executive Succession Planning

Cyndie Feaster Shadow
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Cyndie Shadow

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Review Committee

Dr. Joseph Barbeau, Committee Chairperson, Management Faculty
Dr. Marcia Steinhauer, Committee Member, Management Faculty
Dr. Howard Schechter, University Reviewer, Management Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2018

Abstract

An Exploration of Knowledge Transfer
and Career College Executive Succession Planning

by

Cyndie Shadow

MBA, Golden Gate University, 1994

BA, Princeton University, 1988

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

The career college sector of the post secondary education industry contributes more than \$20 billion to the U.S. economy annually, but turnover in executive leader roles at career colleges is extremely high. Usually, such turnover occurs without succession planning or knowledge transfer for the new executive. The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore the need for knowledge transfer when executive turnover occurs in career colleges. This single case study was framed on theories of knowledge addressing concepts such as knowledge stickiness, transfers, and gaps. The overarching research question concerned how lack of knowledge transfer during executive leadership succession at a career college influences stakeholder engagement, where stakeholders are executives, administrators, and faculty. The conceptual framework for this study was Szulanski's sticky knowledge concept, which pertains to how knowledge transfer from one executive leader to the next may be blocked. Knowledge attrition can be the basis for declining performance and outcomes in an institution such as a career college. In this bounded, exploratory case study using semistructured interviews with stakeholders, the aim was to understand how to improve knowledge transfer in these colleges so that they may remain available for the students they serve, who usually represent the first generation in their families to obtain any postsecondary certification. This aim is socially significant because completion of career education can be a factor leading individuals into the middle class. Social change for a portion of the underserved population can certainly emanate from educational opportunities that lead to career placement, which is why understanding executive succession in career colleges has significance in American society.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to many. First, to my husband, Wayne Shadow, who woke up many mornings wondering where I was, only to find me at my computer, working on this project; second, to my mother, Geraldine Feaster-Bethea, who consistently asked me, “How is your dissertation coming along? You need to get that thing done!” Also to my daughter, Chloe Washington, who threatened to start and finish her own doctoral degree before I finished mine; and a special consideration to my mother-in-law, Ruby Wesley-Shadow, who completed this journey long ago and consistently encouraged me to keep pushing through to the end. Finally, I dedicate this work in loving memory of my father, David A. Feaster. When I was young and faced a big challenge, he would always say, “‘Can’t’ died when I was a little boy.” I repeated that phrase to myself many, many times throughout this journey. Now I can finally say, “Yes, daddy, ‘can’t’ is actually dead.”

Acknowledgments

I worked on this topic because I saw what could happen when a group of career colleges had executive turnover at the campus director level occurring more frequently than once per year. I also saw the school group that created that type of turnover shut down due to decreasing productivity. The students who were caught in the crosshairs of not getting their credentials were scattered to the winds and lost time, money, as well as the will to complete the credentials they sought. That should never happen. I wanted to understand how managers and senior executives in these kinds of schools could avoid ever facing that type of situation in the future.

Sincere gratitude to my doctoral mentor, Dr. Joseph Barbeau, who took me on halfway through my Knowledge Area Module (KAM) process and continued to be patient while he guided and directed me through completing all of my KAMs with an eye toward setting up my dissertation. The members of Dr. Barbeau's cohort also deserve special appreciation for being collegial and encouraging as we all march forward to degree completion. I would also like to thank my other committee member, Dr. Marcia Steinhauer, and my URR, Dr. Howard Schechter, for their guidance and direction during this process.

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This journey has taken more prayer and meditation than I ever thought I would be capable of doing. Thank you to my heavenly father for seeing me through.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background of the Study	2
Problem Statement	6
Purpose of the Study	7
Research Questions	7
Conceptual Framework.....	7
Nature of the Study	11
Definitions.....	14
Assumptions.....	16
Scope and Delimitations	17
Limitations	18
Significance of the Study	20
Significance to Management Practice.....	22
Significance to Social Change	23
Summary	24
Chapter 2: Literature Review	26
Literature Search Strategy.....	26
Conceptual Framework.....	29
Wiig Model for Building and Using Knowledge.....	29
Szulanski’s Knowledge Stickiness	33

Conceptual Rationale	37
Research Question Alignment	38
Practical Application of Concepts	39
Historical Perspective on Knowledge Management and Succession	40
Overview of Knowledge Management	42
Knowledge Attrition	48
Stakeholder Engagement	55
Knowledge Management and Stakeholder Engagement	59
Succession Planning.....	60
Review of Available Research Methodologies	63
Summary	66
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	68
Research Design and Rationale	68
Role of the Researcher	73
Methodology	75
Participant Selection Logic	75
Instrumentation	79
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection	83
Data Analysis Plan.....	86
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	90
Credibility	90
Transferability.....	91
Dependability	92

Confirmability.....	93
Ethical Procedures	93
Summary	95
Chapter 4: Results	98
Pilot Study.....	98
Research Setting.....	99
Demographics	100
Data Collection	101
Data Analysis	104
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	110
Credibility	110
Transferability.....	111
Dependability	112
Confirmability.....	113
Ethical Procedures	114
Study Results	115
A Priori Themes	116
Emergent Themes	123
Triangulation With Student Satisfaction Surveys.....	130
RQ1: How Does the Lack of Knowledge Transfer During Executive Leadership Succession at a Career College Influence Stakeholder Engagement?.....	133

RQ2: How Does the Absence of Knowledge Transfer Among Career College Executives Impede Succession in a Career College?	134
Summary	135
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations	138
Interpretation of Findings	139
Limitations of the Study.....	151
Recommendations	152
Recommendations for Practice	152
Recommendations for Further Research.....	154
Implications.....	155
Significance to Social Change	155
Significance to Theory	156
Significance to Practice.....	158
Conclusions.....	160
Reflections	161
References.....	164
Appendix A: Conducting Exit Interviews.....	190
Appendix B: Student Questionnaire	194
Appendix C: Letter of Invitation to Participate	196

List of Tables

Table 1 Description of Participants From the OPEID101

Table 2 Interview Protocol for Participants From the OPEID.....103

Table 3 Initial Coding Report105

Table 4 Final Coding Report.....109

Table 5 A Priori Theme 1117

Table 6 A Priori Theme 2119

Table 7 A Priori Theme 3120

Table 8 A Priori Theme 4123

Table 9 Emergent Theme 1126

Table 10 Emergent Theme 2.....128

Table 11 Emergent Theme 3.....129

Table 12 Emergent Theme 4.....130

Table 13 Percentage of Excellent Responses to Student Satisfaction Questions132

Table 14 Comparison Between Participants’ Responses and Literature Review150

List of Figures

Figure 1. How perspective influences knowledge purpose	30
Figure 2. Elements that develop into knowledge stickiness in institutions.	35
Figure 3. Movement of knowledge from initiation to integration	39
Figure 4. Relationship between knowledge transfer and stakeholder engagement	57

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Executive leadership is often one of the primary drivers of performance outcomes for stakeholders in career colleges. The executive leader or campus president is responsible for results including revenue, persistence, graduation rates, and career placements for students who complete a program in a career college (Love, Trammell, & Cartner, 2010). The executive leadership role frequently has high turnover and, often, the knowledge required for driving outcomes is not clear when there is a transition from one leader to the next (Tekniepe, 2014). Rapid executive leadership transition without knowledge transfer can lead to a breakdown in the application of effective strategies and tactics to maintain engagement with stakeholders in the career college, including the incoming executive, administrators, and faculty.

Because of the pace at which succession may occur in career colleges, generally the incoming executive stakeholder does not have an opportunity to communicate with the outgoing executive stakeholder. This lack of contact and communication between the two executive leaders can create a knowledge gap, particularly around the tacit knowledge that is an integral part of the effort to engage all stakeholders within the institution (Aktharsha, 2011). Much of the stakeholder engagement that the executive leader needs to foster in an organization is the foundation for delivering on the required results for the institution (Han, Seo, Yoon, & Yoon, 2016). When knowledge transfer does not happen for new executives, there is a risk that outcomes, including persistence, graduation, and placement, may suffer. Exploring what the lack of knowledge does in a succession situation could help to reduce that risk.

This chapter addresses the history of iterative executive transition in career colleges and why it is important to understand the impact that this issue can have in career colleges. A clear problem statement was the basis for conducting this study, as well as for the research questions that guided the research. Following the research questions, there is an explanation of the conceptual framework that provided the foundation for the study, as well as a brief description of the nature of the study, including the limitations and scope of the research. Finally, there is an explanation of the significance of the study to management practice as well as to social change.

Background of the Study

One of the most valuable types of currency within an organization is the knowledge that employees of that institution develop, store, and share. Using this information wisely can reduce the costs of operation and increase efficiencies (Dalkir, 2011). An institution demonstrates value for the knowledge that it has accumulated when there is a plan and a design in place to transfer the knowledge from one employee to the next. This can be particularly helpful in situations where leaders with specific, actionable information conduct a formal handoff of organizational knowledge (Martin-Perez, Martin-Cruz, & Estrada-Vaquero, 2012). Creating a knowledge handoff or knowledge transfer within an organization requires appropriate communication channels that permit the flow of information from one individual to the next. If the individuals sharing the information are leaders in the organization, with one entering the role while the other is exiting it, this communication might be challenging to conduct (Pitra & Zauskova, 2014). Without a transfer of knowledge, the new leader has a possibility of being in a position where the absence of knowledge leads to a decline in stakeholder engagement.

Succession planning is one strategy that an institution can use to reduce the amount of knowledge that stakeholders and the entire institution lose when transitioning from one leader to the next. Institutions that create a succession plan, in advance of potential turnover, can create the opportunity for knowledge transfer as an element of that planning (Klein & Salk, 2013). One of the additional benefits of succession planning, beyond having an individual ready to step into the senior leadership role, is that the development and nurture of other members of the team can lead to stronger performance outcomes before any change in leadership occurs (Rojeck, 2016). In coincidence with this benefit is the notion that the individuals who are conducting the succession planning need to be ready to tap individuals who might be successors and work with them, before succession occurs, to prepare them fully for the next role (Rojeck, 2016). Unfortunately, in the career college industry, succession is often a surprise to many within the college, including the individual who is leaving involuntarily. Although there are some strong predictors of impending dismissal when performance metrics are not meeting expectations, those predictors are not always accurate. The leader who is facing potential dismissal due to lack of performance is not likely to look for his or her replacement and is generally focused on addressing the performance issues that could be an obstacle to him or her remaining in the role.

Beyond ensuring that performance metrics meet expectations, strong leaders in any industry should have an eye on identifying high-potential employees who might fit well into the succession pipeline. Once the senior leaders have identified those individuals, they can work on development and training initiatives to determine if those with high potential are ready to ascend into the next higher level of responsibility

(Newhall, 2015). Sometimes, senior leaders struggle to make the appropriate identification because they lack complete information on the individuals who may fit well into the succession pipeline. Senior leaders may also be under the potentially false impression that they have plenty of time for future leaders to get grooming, training, and development assistance (Newhall, 2015). If the individual who appears to be ready for development and training does not have an attitude and deportment that meshes well with the existing leader's expectations, then the succession planning process may become untenable (Hummel, 2016). In situations where succession plans are neither available nor executable, the knowledge that can assist all stakeholders in remaining fully engaged in the operation and success of the college disappears.

Knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding are behaviors that could contribute to a lack of knowledge transfer in institutions (Connelly et al., 2012). On occasion, individuals within an institution could have the motivation to avoid communicating the knowledge that has become a part of the effectiveness of the team (Connelly et al., 2012). When that occurs, there is a possibility that knowledge does not transfer through communication channels because of knowledge hiding (Connelly et al., 2012). If the employees who want to know and understand more about the institution are unable to do so through informal workplace learning and knowledge sharing because knowledge hiding is prevalent, then there is a risk to the efficacy of the worker who wants to know more (vanRijn, Yang, & Sanders, 2013). Beyond that employee's efficacy in the workplace, knowledge hiding, or the absence of knowledge sharing, can depress motivation and self-identity in the workplace for individuals who are attempting to engage thoroughly (Stewart, 2012). Hiding knowledge prohibits the creation of a learning

organization and leads to situations where knowledge disappears because effective transfers are not in place. Lack of knowledge transfer can lead to a decrease in innovation based on the lessons learned from previous stakeholder encounters and product evaluations (Yoshinobu, 2014). Without knowledge transfer, sometimes knowledge workers within institutions must re-create valuable tools that their institutional colleagues and peers have already developed. Redeveloping tools and products that knowledge workers have already launched within an institution can be a waste of resources and can decrease the efficiencies that organizations strive to achieve and maintain (Wallace, VanFleet, & Downs, 2011). Wasting said resources could also have an impact on stakeholder engagement because employees may believe that the executive leader has no appreciation for their existing efforts and successes.

Executive leaders in institutions who fail to learn from the institution's collected knowledge risk the level of attention and service that they can provide to their stakeholders. Without understanding what has worked for the stakeholders based on the knowledge of the workers within the organization, there is the possibility that current and future stakeholders will have a negative impression of their experience with the institution (Alipour, Idris, & Karimi, 2011). It is in the best interests of an institution's executive leadership team to determine an effective path for knowledge transfer and to apply it when team members, particularly team leaders, transition into or out of organizational roles (Luu Trong, 2012). The stakeholders who bear the effects of changes in leadership without knowledge transfer may also perceive a change in the quality of the experience with the career college (Stake, 2001). If the perception of change in quality leads to decreased stakeholder engagement, there could be a drop in the institution's

performance on its required outcomes.

The measurement of knowledge transfers between entering and exiting executive leaders could emanate from the existence of any training transition or overlap between the two executives where knowledge transfer could occur (Dalkir, 2011). Knowledge transfer might be visible through the existence of written communication prior to transition between the entering and exiting leaders. Documentation of either collaborative time or recorded information is a part of collecting information for analyzing a leadership transition (Dalkir, 2011). In situations where that type of documentation is not available, the new executive leader might presume that there is not any institutional knowledge available.

Problem Statement

Knowledge transfer omission in college executive succession planning is a factor that impacts institutional performance. Executive leadership is one of the primary drivers of all career college outcomes because executive leaders are responsible for results, including operational benchmarks such as revenue generation, student persistence, graduation rates, and career placements for graduates (Love, Trammell, & Cartner, 2010). The performance driven by these leaders resulted in an estimated annual \$38.6 billion contribution to the U.S. economy (Imagine America Foundation, 2007). The general problem is that the executive leadership role has high turnover rates in career colleges (HigherEd Jobs, 2016). The specific problem is that frequently, the exiting leader does not clearly communicate the knowledge required for maintaining stakeholder engagement to drive outcomes to his or her successor (Tekniepe, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to understand more about how the absence of knowledge transfer and succession planning might impact stakeholder engagement when a change in executive leadership occurs at a career college. An assessment of the level of stakeholder engagement derived from completion of semistructured interviews with executives, administrators, and faculty members. Understanding the roles that knowledge transfer, knowledge gaps, and knowledge stickiness play in a career college executive's ability to keep all stakeholders engaged is a good first step for improving career college operational performance, which may lead to a continuing growth pattern for the business.

Research Questions

For this analysis, I evaluated information from semistructured interviews with executives and administrators about the succession in leadership at a career college. The information from these sources addressed the following overarching questions: How does the lack of knowledge transfer during executive leadership succession at a career college influence stakeholder engagement? How does the absence of knowledge transfer among career college executives impede succession in a career college?

Conceptual Framework

The study of knowledge management encompasses several different concepts regarding how institutions and their stakeholders handle internal knowledge. Davenport and Prusak (2002) wrote about one underlying concept of this study, which is a culture of knowledge transfer where knowledge workers transfer, absorb, and then use the knowledge assets within an institution. Per Senge (1990), for knowledge workers to share

knowledge as effectively as possible, organizations must create a learning culture and create as well as support opportunities for individuals within the organization to share ideas to maintain the amassed knowledge and use that knowledge to create innovation. The topics of knowledge management and learning organizations formed the background for the main conceptual framework in this study.

Wiig (1999), who has done extensive studies on the creation and use of knowledge, developed a model for building and using knowledge within institutions. In this model, Wiig posited that there are several types of knowledge as well as various forms of knowledge that institutions generate and then use as building blocks for innovation and advancement. In Wiig's model, the key to using knowledge as the asset that it should be for the institution is to make sure that stakeholders transfer knowledge rapidly within the institution. The rapid transfer must also include improved capture of the knowledge, better retention of existing and newly captured knowledge, acquisition of new knowledge that knowledge workers did not know previously, use of innovations within the firm, collection of knowledge from colleagues within the institution, as well as sourcing of knowledge from colleagues outside the institution (Wiig, 1999). The aforementioned elements form an integral part of developing a learning organization and creating a culture where stakeholders readily share knowledge as a part of succession, particularly when that succession involves executive leadership.

It is important to note that both tacit and explicit knowledge are part of Wiig's model. Tacit knowledge is that which an individual knows but has trouble explaining or sharing with someone else because the knowledge is within that individual's conceptual and sensory understanding and memory (Polanyi, 1974). Tacit knowledge can be very

difficult to transfer because individuals acquire and share this knowledge from the locus of their own passions, experiences and biases. Those biases may or may not be clear to the individual receiving the knowledge from the individual who is sharing that knowledge (Polanyi, 1974). The tacit knowledge element of knowledge transfer can be especially taxing for organizations because there are few ways to identify, evaluate, and ensure the transfer of tacit knowledge assets (Wiig, 1993). This idea becomes even clearer in Wiig's model because he differentiated knowledge based on its accessibility to others. In some instances, it may be possible that individuals within an institution believe that knowledge that relates to the business of the institution is their own personal knowledge and not an asset that they need to share across the enterprise to drive to better outcomes (Wiig, 1993). In other instances, individuals may understand the value and importance of sharing the accumulated knowledge within the institution but do not have effective pathways for knowledge sharing or do not have a recipient who is ready and willing to accept the knowledge that is available for sharing (Wiig, 1993). Both situations can cause significant knowledge attrition during executive succession; thus, the model that Wiig has developed is one that can provide a sound foundation for exploring what occurs when there is a lack of knowledge transfer during executive succession in a career college.

An additional concept framing this study was that of knowledge stickiness and what happens in organizations to ensure that knowledge transfers appropriately and readily between individuals and business units (Szulanski, 2003). The concept of knowledge stickiness has a clear connection to stakeholder engagement levels in educational institutions. This concept addresses how stakeholders achieve and maintain

engagement with their institutions (Szulanski, 2003). The concept of knowledge stickiness, as detailed by Szulanski in 2003, indicates that knowledge within institutions frequently dissipates due to several knowledge barriers. The presence of knowledge stickiness resulting from the knowledge barriers in institutions creates a problem with continuity of management styles, practices, and approaches in a situation where there is an executive leadership change (Szulanski, 2003). A lack of continuity caused by sticky knowledge can lead to questions or concerns about the level of performance that happens in an institution (Baskerville & Dulipovici, 2006). These concerns are ones that an executive or administrator might address through the application of knowledge assets that the institution already possesses, but due to the stickiness of that knowledge and barriers to its passage from one source to the next, there is a possibility that performance may suffer. When a new executive leader has concerns about performance because of a lack of knowledge, there could be an impact on the engagement levels of the executive stakeholder as well as the other stakeholders.

Szulanski (2003) addressed several phases of knowledge transfer and sharing within organizations, including initiation, implementation, ramp-up, and integration. The first phase, initiation, is the one that has the greatest pertinence to executive succession in career colleges because frequently there is no communication between the exiting and entering executive leaders, which means that the initiation of knowledge sharing as a part of the succession is not a viable option. The last phase is also an important element of the conceptual framework because there may be situations where new executive leaders have their own knowledge base collected from other posts in different institutions (Szulanski, 2003). As many new executives are wont to do, a new leader, in an effort to make his or

her mark on the institution, may attempt to integrate knowledge from his or her previous institution into the new institution that previous executives have not ever initiated, implemented, or ramped up. The application of these two concepts to executive succession is one way to explore and evaluate what happens in executive succession when there is no knowledge transfer.

Nature of the Study

As a means of validating that case study research was an appropriate choice for evaluating stakeholder engagement, a review of case studies that provide demonstrable evidence of thoroughly evaluating the topic was necessary. An evaluation of internal branding on employee engagement used questionnaires as inputs for a case study that focused on understanding how engaged employees can drive performance through positively representing the institution's brand and creating greater loyalty within the clientele (Ahmad, Iqbal, Kanwal, Javed, & Javed, 2014). There was a case study research project that looked specifically at how employee engagement connects to the economic future of some enterprises by reviewing employee engagement surveys and monitoring the fluctuations in engagement that occurred during major organizational changes (Cattermole, Johnson, & Jackson, 2014). One other study emerged from the collection of engagement impression and responses to employee satisfaction questionnaires to identify which employees could contribute the most useful short case studies to understand performance drivers and improvements (Karatepe & Karadas, 2015). The three previous case study examples led to an idea of attempting to understand how the absence of succession planning could lead to a decline in employee engagement resulting in decreased performance for an institution. Because decreased performance can be a

predictor of rapid executive succession, it appeared that case study evaluation could be a useful tool to address the problem.

Other case studies focused on the impact that leadership and leadership development could have on an organization's performance and continued employee engagement. In one study, the case looked at the value and importance of a leader's skillset when guiding other employees through difficult circumstances, including changes in the industry and/or regulatory environment (Tonvongval, 2013). The for-profit career college industry has been experiencing significant regulatory and market changes in recent years, and the need for employee engagement through strong leadership continues to grow in career colleges. The use of small groups of individuals to collect specific information related to employee engagement and how that engagement affects the operations of an institution is another example of how the case study method could deliver valuable information to an institution's leadership. When looking at the case study research method and considering the size of the potential sample, it is important to ensure that the data collected have enough depth and detail to provide insights into how employee engagement and performance link together (Slack, Corlett, & Morris, 2015). One way to provide that depth and detail was to obtain extended responses to questions related to the research topic and to do so with highly specific selection of study participants (Slack et al., 2015).

The single case study design was appropriate for the study of whether a change in stakeholder engagement occurred following an executive leadership succession without knowledge transfer. There were several reasons that supported the selection of a qualitative single case to fit this situation. The instrument was the researcher conducting a

series of semistructured interviews, which made the study qualitative (Schreier, 2014). The participants in this study included 12 career college professionals consisting of four executives, four administrators, and four faculty members, all of whom experienced leadership succession without knowledge transfer at a career college, regarding job knowledge competence and ability to achieve the desired outcomes of the college. The case study approach was a viable option for working with the complexity of comparing the transcriptions of semistructured interviews from the stakeholders and identifying common themes from the semistructured interview responses (Yin, 2013). These common themes allowed for understanding whether and how stakeholder engagement changes when knowledge transfer does not occur.

Answering research questions about stakeholder engagement in a group of three career colleges reflected the essence of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). The group of three career colleges was the bounded system, and it contained a small population of executives and administrators who experienced executive transition during a 2-year period. Within this bounded system, a phenomenon had occurred, and understanding the response to that phenomenon required studying elements of the bounded system and the people affected by the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Another type of qualitative study, phenomenology, was a consideration for this project but was not a good fit because it required more in-depth communication with individuals in the sample than was feasible to get a balanced understanding of all stakeholders impacted by the leadership change (Sullivan, 2009). Ethnography was an additional type of study that I considered because the executives, administrators, and faculty members within the three New Jersey career college locations could have appeared to be part of a cultural group or community

(Sullivan, 2009). Ethnography was not a viable option for this study because of the interaction with the community that I would have been required to have (Sullivan, 2009). All of these factors combined to make the case study approach the most reasonable option for this research project.

Definitions

Admissions and/or recruitment department: The individuals who are responsible for reaching out to potential students for the career college and convincing them to enroll with the specific career college where the admissions and/or recruitment representatives work. In some situations, the members of this department apply significant pressure to potential students in an effort to gain commitment from them to start a program at the career college (Alderdice, 2015).

Career college: A postsecondary institution granting certificates, diplomas, and/or associate's degrees for specific job titles such as medical assistant, surgical technician, massage therapist, and information technology technician (Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges, 2015).

Career services department: The group of employees within a college who are responsible for collecting information about career opportunities for the college's graduates and sharing that information with the students prior to graduation. These employees also coach, guide, direct, and practice job-seeking skills with students to ensure that graduates are ready to achieve employment (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014).

Employee engagement: The level of connection and commitment to an enterprise that drives an individual to put forth a high degree of focus, attention,

and energy on work tasks. In some situations, a high level of engagement results in employees being more productive in the workplace, whereas a low level of engagement results in employees who perform below the institution's standard (Guaspari, 2015).

Executive succession planning: Creation of a strategy that allows an institution to maintain the tacit and explicit knowledge held by senior executives in the institution following the departure of a senior leader. This strategy should provide the tools and resources necessary to ensure the maintenance of institutional processes and a smooth transition from one executive leader to the next (Hall-Ellis, 2015).

Financial aid department: Leadership and staff in a career college who process financial aid applications and create financial aid packages for new and existing students within the career college. This department is responsible for processing financial aid packages within the bounds of U.S. Department of Education regulations and verifying that all students and staff members remain in compliance with all applicable laws (Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges, 2015).

Graduation rate: The percentage of students who matriculate and then graduate within 150% of the scheduled time frame for completion of the certificate or degree for which the students enrolled (Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges, 2015).

Office of Postsecondary Education Identification (OPEID): An identification number that the U.S. Department of Education assigns to

institutions so that those institutions can be eligible to collect federal financial aid (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Persistence: The ability of a student to remain enrolled in his or her academic program consistently from the point of matriculation until graduation without interruption for any reason. Students who persist are more likely to graduate than students who stop attending during an academic program and then attempt to re-enter an academic program (Burkholder et al., 2013).

Placement rate: The percentage of graduates from each graduating class who gain a position in the field that is either directly or indirectly in line with the academic credential that they have just earned (Harrell & Matthews, 2016).

Assumptions

The first assumption was that the stakeholders interviewed for this study had adequate recall of their experiences with executive succession that occurred to provide perspective and understanding of its impact on them. The population that I interviewed for this case study was composed of executives who lived and worked through the succession process, administrators who reported to those executives, and faculty members who were teaching during the timeframe of the succession. There was an additional assumption that all stakeholders interviewed for this study were willing participants who wanted to contribute information about their experiences to the research project.

The second assumption was that collecting information through a semistructured interview that came out of employee engagement survey tools addressed the overarching research question. This tool needed to work for all types of stakeholders in this process at

all levels of the organization during the executive succession. The use of the semistructured interview data in a single case study that encompassed a group of schools accurately reflected how succession without knowledge transfer can impact stakeholders.

The third assumption combined three elements. The first element was that semistructured interviews conducted with all executive stakeholders who participated in a succession without knowledge transfer provided insights into how the succession affected the executive leaders in career colleges where the executive succession occurred. The second element was that beyond the executive leaders, semistructured interviews with administrators provided perspective on how those who reported to the successive executive leaders responded to knowledge attrition due to the absence of knowledge transfer. The third element was that semistructured interviews with faculty members also shed light on how the teaching and learning experience changed with the executive succession lacking knowledge transfer. Taken together, these three elements provided enough information to have a better understanding of the effect that executive succession without knowledge transfer had on the stakeholders who were working through the executive succession.

Scope and Delimitations

Included in the scope of this study were career college stakeholders within a group of three colleges in Central New Jersey. The stakeholders comprised three groups: (a) executive stakeholders who experienced succession with no knowledge sharing from their predecessors to themselves, (b) administrative stakeholders who reported to the changing executives without knowledge sharing and remained responsible for delivering performance outcomes, and (c) faculty stakeholders who were teaching at the career

colleges during the time of the succession and needed to focus on student success, persistence, and graduation rates. All three groups of stakeholders had to achieve the required outcomes while experiencing their career college evolving under the leadership of individuals who both did and did not have the benefit of tacit knowledge of the organization procured through knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing. Other types of career college employees such as line employees were not part of this study because they might not have the depth and breadth of information necessary to fully respond concerning how knowledge attrition impacted their individual performance within the institution. Although those individuals likely had some insights on succession without knowledge transfer, they were typically not in regular, frequent communication with the executive who was navigating the succession process, which would have created a dearth of information on the impact of this type of succession for those individuals. Additionally, while other career colleges as well as community colleges and traditional colleges may have experience with executive succession lacking knowledge transfer, it was logical to maintain a small group whose members had all worked within the same larger institution and therefore had similar exposure to the knowledge management practices of that one institution.

Limitations

While this study focused on a single group of career colleges in a specific geographical location, there may be some transferability of the general concept that colleges need to develop a plan for executive succession planning that includes knowledge sharing. The main limitation here was that for this study, I looked only at career colleges where the executive turnover rate was as much as 80% in an 18-month

period of operations. The information collected in this study was qualitative in nature, creating another limitation of determining how to apply the qualitative results to the quantitative nature of career college performance.

Some biases that could have influenced the study outcomes included a concern among all participants that the career college eventually filed for bankruptcy and left all stakeholders to find other accommodations during the middle of a school term. The data that these stakeholders provided came through semistructured interviews, where there was an opportunity for that bias to become evident in their responses. Because the school filed for bankruptcy in 2014 and I collected the data in 2017, there may also have been bias of memory or lack thereof within the participants.

I addressed these limitations through the semistructured interview questions themselves, which focused on perceptions of events at the time that they occurred rather than using a reflective view of events. The conceptual framework of the study including Wiig's model for building and using knowledge and Szulanski's knowledge stickiness were the foundation for how I selected and delivered semistructured interview questions to the study participants to dispel as much of any bias as may have existed.

An additional limitation was the size of the sample. The intended sample size for this research study was 12 subjects. While this size was appropriate to the time frame that I selected to study for executive succession, it did provide a limited view of the case. Because of the sample size, there may have been less complete information on the type of impact that knowledge transfer or its absence might have had on executives who were involved in succession. In contrast, the type of semistructured interview questions and the ability to allow the study participants to give significant detail and description of their

opinions and experiences provided for a rich and thick depiction of the perceptions that executives, administrators, and faculty members had about their ability to be successful in situations where executive succession occurred without any planning. Essentially, despite the potential limitations of the smaller sample size, the level of detail that the members of that sample provided helped to balance against the smaller sample size.

Significance of the Study

Career college executive leaders are on the forefront of social change because the outcomes that they produce lead to better building blocks for the American middle class. An evaluation of stakeholder perceptions about succession without knowledge transfer could have an impact toward positive social change due to its potential to lead to better career institutional outcomes for populations that are underserved. Social change could be a result of more success in career college outcomes because colleges are producing graduates who can contribute to positive economic and social outcomes for society (Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities, 2015a). The outcomes that executive leaders are responsible for include revenue, persistence, graduation rate, and career placement (Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges, 2014). Because of the demography of the students who enroll in career college programs, the risks associated with an executive leader not meeting performance requirements include the inability for students to obtain higher paying jobs, inability to repay student debt, and inability to re-enter a college program at a later date due to academic failure and outstanding student debt (Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities, 2015b). In cases where a student leaves a program before completion because of poor stakeholder engagement, it is likely an indication that the executive leader has not

achieved objectives for managing the institution toward the appropriate positive outcomes (Love, Trammell, & Cartner, 2010). The absence of the appropriate positive outcomes could lead to having students who do not meet the appropriate persistence and graduation rates.

Stakeholders who experience and respond to executive leadership change may feel a decrease in engagement because of that leadership change, particularly if they sense that the new leader does not have a tacit understanding of the institutional culture and structure that has kept them focused on achieving the college's outcomes. Students who have little or no engagement are more likely to leave their programs before completion (Elliott & Shin, 2010). The sense of community that an executive stakeholder creates with administrators and faculty members can lead to employee engagement, which is one factor required to meet key institutional performance measures such as revenue, persistence, graduation, and career placement (Elliott & Shin, 2010). Career colleges are frequently a stepping-stone to the middle class for those who are economically disadvantaged, sometimes through other 2-year and 4-year degree granting programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Earning capacity, longevity, and lifelong satisfaction can relate closely to the completion of a 4-year degree, which also adds to the value of ensuring that this first educational step is successful for those who come from educationally underserved demographic groups (Crimmins & Saito, 2001). Semistructured interviews provided insight into whether there is a change in stakeholder engagement after a change in leadership occurs, which provided perspective on how to address any changes in stakeholder engagement.

Significance to Management Practice

There are two primary areas of significance to the field of management that can come from the research on transferring knowledge and its connection to stakeholder engagement. The first involves the idea of knowledge transfer as a social construct more than as a transaction that can occur through document and data sharing. Creating a community of practice around a specific topic and adjusting the expectation that knowledge sharing is more of a social activity than simply a transition of facts and figures can enrich the transfer of knowledge and provide necessary context for the knowledge to become actionable (Jackson & Klobas, 2006). As businesses and their managers face transition, it is important to the continuity of productivity to have a plan in place for the transfer of knowledge through a succession plan/process or system that maintains context and tacit elements of the wider knowledge base (Gustavsen, 2004). Addressing knowledge transfer as an element of the organization with social implications, potentially through communities of practice, increases the relevance of tacit knowledge and may also improve the organizational benefits of the knowledge transfer process (Dalkir, 2011). If a new executive leader can absorb and apply the tacit knowledge of his or her predecessor, then it could be possible for the new leader to meld more easily into the institution's culture.

The second area of significance to the field of management involves the importance of creating a culture of knowledge sharing to develop a learning organization. The field of management has focused attention on the value of knowledge and information within an institution, but those who have understand the value of knowledge do not always create a culture where knowledge sharing, and transition occur on a

consistent basis (Chawla & Joshi, 2011). As more institutions and organizations focus on the value of knowledge as an asset to the firm as well as on the knowledge worker as the key to making effective use of that asset, understanding the role that knowledge transition and succession play in performance and outcomes could become more important (Naim & Lenkla, 2016). If leaders are interested in developing the talent that they have rather than seeking, hiring, training, and acclimating new talent, then the creation of a learning organization that promotes innovation and self-efficacy is a must (Ma, Cheng, Ribbens, & Zhou, 2013). Ethical behavior within the firm dictates that knowledge sharing become part and parcel of work activity for all employees and that the senior leaders within the firm are responsible for creating an environment where all workers understand and are comfortable with the expectations of knowledge sharing and collaborating within a learning organization (Tang, Bavik, Chen, & Tjosvold, 2015). Additionally, employee stakeholders who feel that they have access to all of the knowledge assets they need to be successful in their roles are likely to be more effective contributors to the institution.

Significance to Social Change

This study provided information on whether or not career colleges, with a historically high turnover rate in the executive leadership role, need to establish either a community of practice or a knowledge transition protocol for executives who manage the operations of these schools. Engagement of stakeholders can lead to students who are more likely to complete a career education program and use that education to improve their financial and personal circumstances. When analysis of collected semistructured interview responses shows that stakeholders have less engagement due to a lack of knowledge transfer, then those who are responsible for directing the activities and

individual career colleges may have reason to consider formalizing a strong knowledge transfer system at the executive level within career colleges.

This type of study has an impact toward positive social change because of the demographics of the student population that typically begins a program within a career college (Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2013). Frequently, these students are first generation college students who have few other opportunities to create a career that will provide steady income and benefits for them and possibly their family members. Additionally, if a student becomes frustrated with the constantly changing leadership and culture and decides to exit the program prior to completion, he or she risks being in debt for a large portion of the program's cost without getting the benefit of having earned a credential that could lead to a job. This lack of a credential with a high outstanding student debt often prevents the student from completing a program at a later point in time or can impede his or her ability to obtain work requiring a credit check in the future. Earning capacity, longevity, and lifelong satisfaction could be a result of completing a 4-year degree, which adds to the value of ensuring that this first educational step is successful for those who come from educationally underserved demographic groups (Fletcher & Frisvold, 2014). Ensuring that career colleges can deliver on expected outcomes is an important part of supporting these demographic groups.

Summary

Knowledge management is a discipline that has significant value for managers in all types of business. The concepts of knowledge transition, knowledge sharing, and knowledge stickiness have pertinence to executive succession in career colleges. In situations where new career college executives do not gain important elements of tacit

knowledge about the college before taking over a leadership role, there may be a risk to the successful operation of the career college. Much of that risk could come from a lack of stakeholder engagement in the operations of the career college. To mitigate that risk, it is important to understand what elements of knowledge management might need to be a part of executive succession and succession planning in career colleges. Developing a case study from all stakeholders in a career college based on knowledge management concepts could be a starting point toward mitigating that risk. Chapter 2 is a review of literature relevant to knowledge management, employee engagement, and succession planning. This literature review addresses some of the recent trends in how succession planning connects to the knowledge assets of an institution. Chapter 3 contains a description of the methods that I used for capturing information about how the absence of knowledge transfer during executive succession does or does not have an impact on the performance of executives and staff members in career colleges. Chapter 4 describes the results of the collected semistructured interview responses, including the themes that emerged from the study participants and how those themes relate to the literature. Chapter 5 is a summary of interpretations of the collected data as well as what those recommendations mean to both theory and practice, including recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Knowledge transfer omission during the succession of career college executives can have a negative impact on the performance of career colleges. The purpose of this single case study was to explore how the absence of knowledge transfer and succession planning may impact stakeholder engagement when a change in executive leadership occurs at a career college. Current literature on succession without knowledge transfer tends to focus on larger institutions and does not provide much insight for medium-sized and smaller institutions (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012). Career colleges are often smaller institutions, with fewer than 100 staff and faculty stakeholders (Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges, 2014). There is an absence of research about how the issue of no knowledge transfer during executive succession in smaller institutions may have an influence on how new leaders perceive their potential effectiveness and engagement with the institution.

This chapter addresses the search strategy used to locate current literature related to the topic. The chapter also describes the theory supporting knowledge transfer. Aside from knowledge transfer, the chapter describes the concept of knowledge stickiness in relationship to knowledge transfer. The chapter also provides an overview of the current literature addressing knowledge transfer and succession.

Literature Search Strategy

A full exploration of questions about knowledge transfer in an executive leadership transition has several components. One of those components involves how the presence or absence of knowledge transfer could have an impact on the satisfaction level of institutional stakeholders. These components have led to several different types of

searches that connect to different aspects of the research questions and the purpose of this study. I conducted all searches through the University of Phoenix library, which allows a single search string to span across multiple databases, including EBSCO Host, ProQuest, ABI/Inform, ACM Digital Library, Emerald, and so forth. The literature search included only peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, conference proceedings, and books/ebooks and focused on references published from March 1, 2013 to present. The following were the main search strings, which I present along with a brief explanation of why each search string fit within this literature review.

Some of the searches pertained specifically to the study of knowledge management and specific theories, encompassing topics such as *knowledge transfer*, *knowledge management*, *knowledge gap*, *knowledge stickiness*, and *sticky knowledge*. In addition to the concepts of knowledge stickiness, knowledge transition, and knowledge gap, I conducted a tangential search on the topic of *knowledge hiding* and *knowledge hoarding* in institutions. I included this search because during executive transition, there can be instances where individuals within an institution attempt to strengthen their position or leverage by using the power of knowledge that they have collected without sharing that information with others.

Community of practice was another topic for which I searched in connection with knowledge management because a community of practice is one in which knowledge workers can easily transfer and maintain knowledge within an institution with much lower risk of knowledge hiding or hoarding. This search included the terms *community of practice AND knowledge transfer* and *community of practice AND knowledge stickiness*.

Searches involving college president transition and executive leadership transition were important for finding research on the concepts in this research. Because for-profit colleges operate in the manner of a corporation as well as in the manner of a college, it seemed valuable to collect both kinds of research on leadership transition in these two types of enterprise. In addition to college president transition, the entire area of succession planning was a search topic as well. The search terms in this instance included *career college president transition*, *career college president turnover*, and *college president succession*. This was because of the impact that a succession plan or lack thereof may have on the way that knowledge transfers within an institution.

Research on employee engagement connected to the stakeholders in this study. There were several searches on the impact that knowledge management and knowledge transition can have on employee engagement. Additionally, the connection between succession planning and employee engagement was a topic that had some depth, so it was a part of the search for relevant information on this study. The terms for this search included *employee engagement AND knowledge transfer*, *employee engagement AND succession planning*, and *employee engagement AND knowledge hiding*.

Because this project involved a group of three career college locations in a single geographical area, it lent itself easily to becoming a bounded case study. The search string for methodology included *case study methodology*, *semistructured interviews AND case study*, as well as *bounded case study*.

The social change aspect of this research evolved from the concept that students in for-profit colleges are more likely to be successful and pave a path to economic security if they complete their programs and are eligible for related job placement.

Information to explain how social change related to career college student success is required for that argument. The pace of executive leadership change in career colleges is also visible in research from accrediting bodies.

Conceptual Framework

Exploring perspectives on how to approach a new role without any knowledge transfer prior to entering the role required an understanding of the concepts and theories that underpin knowledge sharing and transfer. There were several models available to understand how knowledge workers within institutions collect, store, deploy, and evaluate knowledge assets; however, the focus of this study rests primarily on the transfer of knowledge during executive succession. The following is a description of the primary concepts that laid the foundation for this study.

Wiig Model for Building and Using Knowledge

One source for a theoretical foundation on sharing and/or transferring knowledge within institutions was the Wiig model of building and using knowledge. This model arose from the concept of knowledge resting on the principles of completeness, connectedness, congruency, as well as perspective and purpose (Dalkir, 2011). Once the knowledge has rested, according to these principles, it becomes more manageable for individuals within an institution to internalize and begin to apply. The first principle, completeness, depends upon having all the available information as well as having an individual within the firm who knows about the existence of the information (Wiig, 1993). Connectedness explains how various elements of knowledge within a firm exist within context because knowledge elements in a vacuum have much less value (Wiig, 1993). Congruency is a principle that ensures that there is consistency across knowledge

elements that an institution's knowledge workers have collected (Wiig, 1993).

Perspective and purpose refers to the users and/or managers of the knowledge, and how those users and/or managers access the knowledge i.e. on-demand access to knowledge elements (Wiig, 1993). The last principle, perspective and purpose, is the one that has the greatest connection to knowledge sharing. This perspective and purpose principle also connects to the forms of knowledge that users can internalize. As demonstrated in Figure 1, an individual's perspective about any specific piece of knowledge within an institution has an impact on the purpose for which that individual collected, stored, and applied that knowledge. This figure is my visual interpretation of perspective and purpose based on Wiig's description.

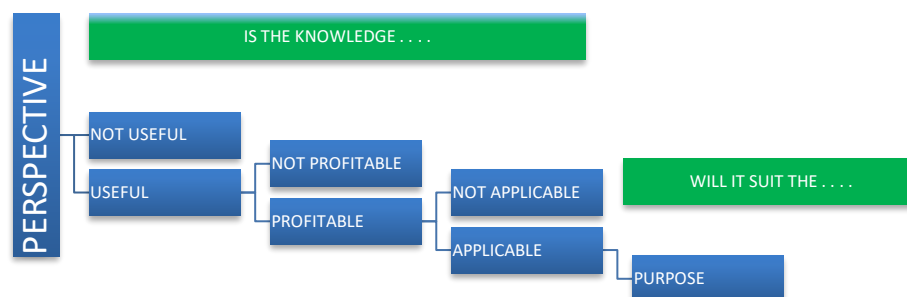


Figure 1. How perspective influences knowledge purpose.

Wiig (1993) described three forms of knowledge that users internalize. The first form is explicit knowledge, which Wiig called *public knowledge*. Public knowledge is generally available and is often taught or shared readily or easily within an institution. Examples of public knowledge might include training manuals, corporate intranets, and the public Internet (Wiig, 1993). The second form is *personal knowledge*, which is what individuals know tacitly and use to conduct their daily lives. Personal knowledge does not transfer between individuals and is the least accessible form of knowledge (Wiig,

1993). The third form is *shared expertise*. Shared expertise is what knowledge workers discuss and work together to develop and augment on a consistent basis. Shared expertise is commonly found in communities of practice or in formal or informal networks where participants discuss relevant knowledge. Usually, shared expertise is a means of developing and honing professional expertise within a group of like-minded professionals (Wiig, 1993). The shared expertise type of knowledge is the one that has direct application to knowledge transfer within an institution when succession occurs without a plan.

This model divides knowledge into four types in addition to the three forms mentioned previously. These types include factual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, expectational knowledge, and methodological knowledge (Wiig, 1993). Particularly within the third form of knowledge, shared expertise, these types of knowledge are an important part of creating effective knowledge transfer within an institution. *Factual knowledge* focuses on data and cause-and-effect information. *Conceptual knowledge* centers on systems and concepts. *Expectational knowledge* takes information from intuition, hunches, and heuristic sources. *Methodological knowledge* develops from strategic approaches and decision making (Wiig, 1993). All four of the knowledge types are integral to knowledge transfer when it occurs.

The shared expertise form of knowledge within the Wiig model is the specific element of the theory that relates most closely to knowledge transfer. Communities of practice as well as networks, both formal and informal, contribute to the flow of knowledge within an institution from one executive to the next. All of the knowledge forms, once internalized, can become a part of the practical application of knowledge

within the institution (Dalkir, 2011). Applying shared expertise, as a protocol within managing knowledge, to increase the incidence of knowledge transfer is one construct that Wiig's model for building and using knowledge supports. The consistent practice of effective behavior that reflects the importance of applying the sharing expertise principles was an essential factor for the application of Wiig's model (Wiig, 1999). Wiig (1999) further supported this element of his theoretical model by suggesting that individuals who receive knowledge through shared expertise have the potential to understand better how to implement an institution's strategic plan through each of the work activities that they conduct daily. Application of an existing strategic plan is one channel that might provide a higher likelihood of the new executive leader understanding more about the tacit knowledge elements of the institution, leading to performance improvements.

The application of Wiig's model in many institutions may provide outcomes that lead to improved performance for those institutions. Some of the anticipated outcomes from the model include better innovations within institutions and better retention of the collected knowledge within a given institution (Wiig, 1999). One of the other expected outcomes from the application of the model is improvement in the method of knowledge transfer between knowledge workers. Such improved transfer could lead to increased access to intellectual capital within a firm. Improvement in knowledge transfer between knowledge workers is a factor contributing to less knowledge attrition in institutions, which means more opportunity to leverage existing knowledge and expertise to improve outcomes as evidenced by performance metrics for the institution (Wiig, 1999). The potential outcomes from the application of Wiig's model were strong reasons to use this

knowledge management theoretical model as a foundation point for understanding more about knowledge transfer through shared expertise.

Szulanski's Knowledge Stickiness

Szulanski's conceptual framework of knowledge stickiness was integral to understanding how and why transferring knowledge during executive succession can be problematic within institutions. Knowledge is sticky when information that individuals or groups should disseminate amongst themselves within an institution remains stuck with the originator of the knowledge or with someone who has received the knowledge at an earlier point in time (Szulanski, 2003). When individuals in a firm are less than comfortable sharing knowledge that they have either created or acquired, knowledge can become sticky. Szulanski described this conceptual framework within the context of a situation where the agents of a firm may recognize that sharing knowledge with peers, subordinates, or managers could benefit the firm as a whole but are reluctant to do so for a myriad of reasons.

Some of the reasons that individuals within a firm may be unwilling to share knowledge, thus making it sticky, include a loss of power and influence within the firm because knowledge is exclusive to the knowledge holder (Szulanski, 2003). Another reason for individuals within a firm maintaining the knowledge that they have is that there is not a strong relationship between the person who holds the knowledge and the individual(s) who are interested in attaining that knowledge (Szulanski, 2003). A significant barrier to knowledge moving without stickiness from one resource to another resource in a firm is the nonexistence of strong working and perhaps social relationships between the individuals who should participate in the knowledge sharing (Szulanski,

2003). There may also be cultural factors within institutions that contribute to the stickiness of knowledge within some settings. When institutions do not create, practice, and maintain a culture built on learning and sharing, the individuals within the institution who lead the way toward knowledge sharing may become outsiders because their activities are unfamiliar to other individuals within the firm (Szulanski, 2003).

Knowledge stickiness can be the result of individuals within the institution believing that sharing and transferring the knowledge that they have will cause ostracism for themselves. It can also result from the absence of incentive for individuals in the institution to share. In some cases, the nonexistence of motivation to share both tacit and explicit knowledge results from a culture that focuses on and rewards only individual contributions to the institution rather than team contributions (Szulanski, 2003). In other cases, the knowledge that remains sticky might appear to be a source of power within the institution, and the individuals who have access to that power could be less than willing to relinquish it to others in the institution if compensation for doing so is not immediately evident. Figure 2, which is my visual interpretation of Szulanski's description of how institutions create knowledge stickiness, is below.

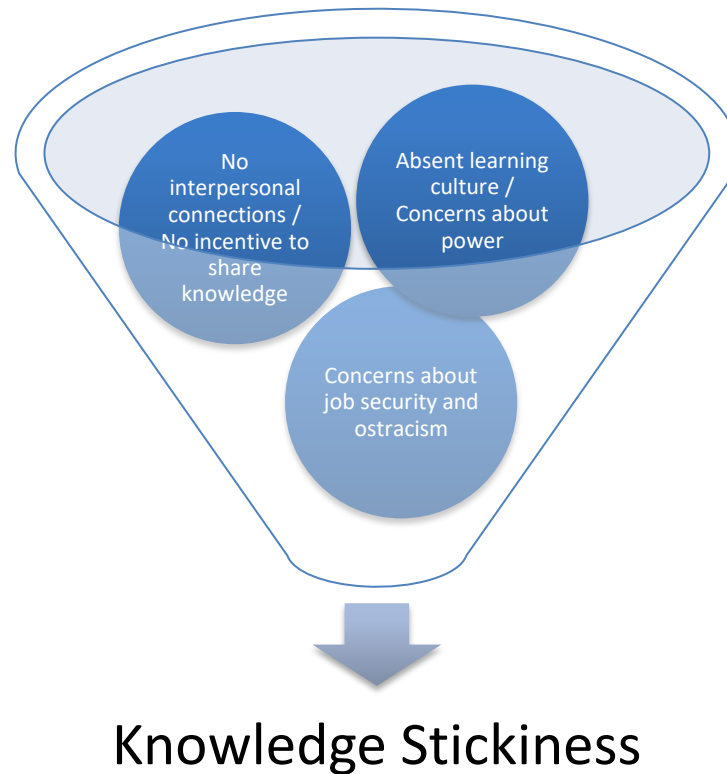


Figure 2. Elements that develop into knowledge stickiness in institutions.

When any of the situations mentioned above occur—including lack of trust, lack of institutional culture, or fear of power loss—knowledge within an institution may become sticky. In this case, *stickiness* refers to the knowledge remaining with one source inside the firm rather than moving to other stakeholders who might be able to use it effectively (Szulanski, 2003). There are other reasons that knowledge might become sticky as well, such as loss of individual knowledge resources, meaning individuals leaving the institution prior to sharing the knowledge that they have accumulated or individuals electing to keep the knowledge that they have amassed as a means of gaining power/control within the institution (Handoko, Bresnen, & Nugroho, 2017). When that occurs, the knowledge sticks with the stakeholder who has exited the institution and is no

longer available to the individuals who might make profitable use of it (Szulanski, 2003). There may also be technological barriers that cause knowledge to stick within one area of an institution or with one department or manager. This type of stickiness can occur when there are information technology systems that are unable to communicate and share knowledge effectively between individuals or across platforms (Szulanski, 2003). When institutional stakeholders allow knowledge that is a result of any and all resources within a firm to become a utility that is available to all stakeholders within the institution, there is a greater likelihood of innovation and increased performance within that institution (Zhang, Qi, Wang, & Pawar, 2017). Whether the reason for knowledge remaining stuck within one area of a firm is human resources or technological resources, the stickiness itself can become a barrier to the institution's productivity.

Szulanski (2003) described a typology of stickiness where there are four different manners in which knowledge can become sticky: initiation, implementation, ramp-up, and integration. Initiation stickiness occurs when individuals within the firm fail to recognize or identify a knowledge gap and the available knowledge to fill the gap within the firm. Implementation stickiness is a product of a technical gap in the application of knowledge to specific firm activities after knowledge users in the firm have filled the initial knowledge gap. Ramp-up stickiness can be the result when individuals in the firm, who have received transferred knowledge, begin to apply that transferred knowledge but encounter problems in the application of knowledge to unexpected problems. After the unexpected problems encountered in ramp-up have a resolution and there is an application of the transferred knowledge, the last stage of stickiness is integration stickiness. Integration stickiness occurs when new practices may not gain traction

because of difficulties that happen when members of the firm implement those practices (Szulanski, 2003). Of the four stickiness typologies described, the initiation stickiness typology is the most applicable element of this conceptual framework.

Conceptual Rationale

Knowledge sharing in institutions has the potential to create innovation and improvement upon outcomes. Sometimes, after executive transition occurs, individuals within institutions are reluctant to participate in the practices associated with knowledge sharing and transfer (Child, Duarte, Tanure, & Rodrigues, 2012). The Wiig model's description of the initiation stage of knowledge building underpins the idea of new knowledge becoming useful and shared among knowledge workers within an organization. Unsuccessful attempts to initiate the knowledge building and sharing within an institution could mean that there will be knowledge attrition from the institution.

When new individuals within an institution experience specific types of knowledge that are particular to the institution, there may be significant potential for initiation stickiness to become an issue. Initiation stickiness is especially pertinent to succession within institutions because it stems from a scarcity of knowledge transfer opportunities (Szulanski, 2003). In addition to the paucity of options for knowledge transfer to occur, there may also be an issue with individuals existing within the institution believing that some of the knowledge is an integral part of forgone institutional beliefs, which all individuals in the institution, even the new ones, clearly understand (Szulanski, 2003). Because these contributors to initiation stickiness may be somewhat common in career college institutions, the conceptual framework of knowledge stickiness is one that had significant applicability to this study.

Research Question Alignment

In this study, the overarching question was the following: How does the lack of knowledge transfer during executive leadership succession at a career college influence stakeholder engagement? The secondary question was the following: How does the absence of knowledge transfer among career college executives impede succession in a career college? The frameworks posited by both Wiig and Szulanski have information concerning knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer, and the potential lack of both. In each framework, there was a foundational principle regarding how the transfer of knowledge might affect the operation and outcomes of an institution. Both conceptual frameworks also addressed how stakeholders within an institution might respond to situations where they either do or do not transfer knowledge, but the recipients do not appear to receive the knowledge well. Because both frameworks also addressed productivity and stakeholder connection to productivity through knowledge collection, retention, and application, the use of these frameworks provided sufficient background to explore how stakeholders might respond in situations where knowledge transfer is problematic.

As demonstrated by Figure 3 below, which is my interpretation of the movement of knowledge from initiation to integration based on Szulanski's (2003) description, there is potentially a direct path available when attempting to create succession that is effective within institutions. The knowledge must transfer from its source to its recipient through several stages. The diagram below depicts the importance of the first step, which is initiation by the source to establish the path for the knowledge to follow. In career college

succession, the source could be the departing executive and the recipient could be the entering executive.

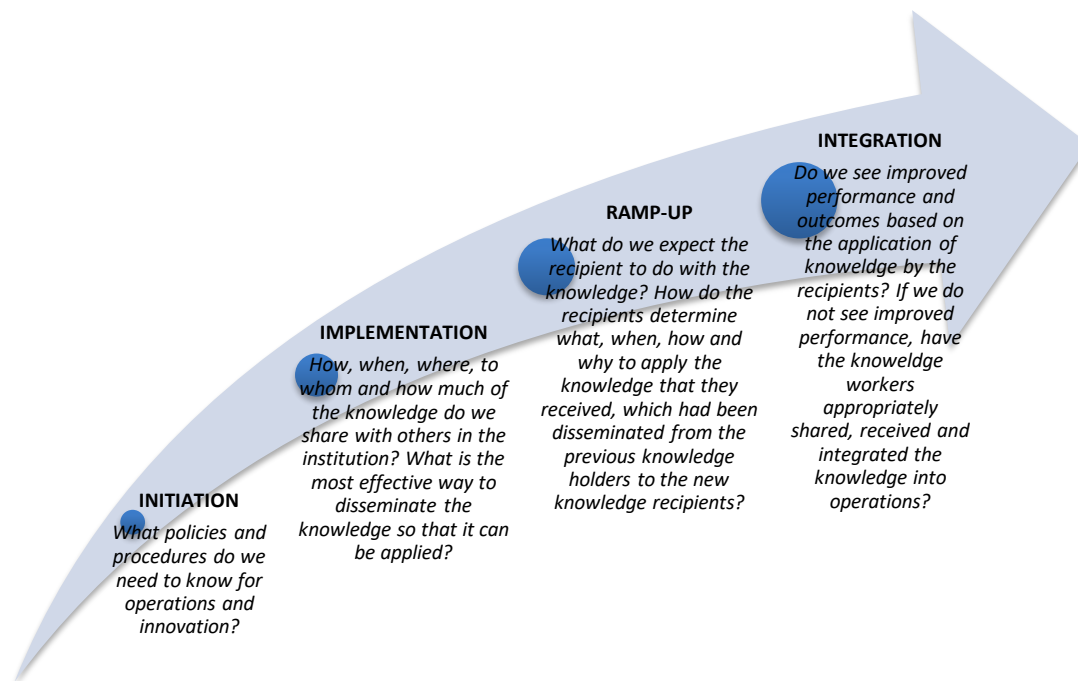


Figure 3. Movement of knowledge from initiation to integration.

Practical Application of Concepts

Understanding how to navigate the initiation stage of knowledge building while avoiding the trap of knowledge stickiness could be an especially important concept for executive succession in career colleges. To gain that understanding, management practitioners within these institutions likely need to gain awareness of the processes that are a part of the initiation stage and the pitfalls that are likely to attend those processes. Providing concrete examples and definitions of knowledge types and forms as well as of sharing practices and risks is how the conceptual frameworks from both Wiig and Szulanski had the potential for application to practical issues in career colleges.

Historical Perspective on Knowledge Management and Succession

Executive leadership transition within institutions can create issues with knowledge transition and knowledge stickiness. These gaps reflect a lack of succession planning prior to the transition. (Bordia, Restubog, Jimmieson, & Irmer, 2011). The repository of knowledge, built by one leader and used to manage the institution effectively, may dissolve and disappear when a new leader takes the helm (Bracci & Vagnotti, 2014). A lack of knowledge transfer and increased confusion caused by rapid changes in the executive leadership role is one reason that new leaders might have trouble maintaining an institutional culture that is conducive to stakeholder engagement (Kilburn, Kilburn, & Cates, 2014). A review of the current relevant literature provides information on how the omission of knowledge transfer might impact stakeholder engagement within an institution, which could lead to a decrease in performance outcomes.

The potential for decrease in stakeholder engagement due to a new executive leader with a substantial knowledge gap could become a business productivity problem in any institution (Hegazy & Ghorab, 2014). In privately owned, for-profit career colleges, the issue can extend beyond business productivity toward a long-term negative impact on the stakeholders (Appel & Taylor, 2015). The potential for long term negative impact derives from the likelihood of stakeholders, dissatisfied with the knowledge gap at the executive level, choosing to leave the institution creating decreased revenue, persistence, and graduation rates as well as a lack of placement for the graduates.

A review of the literature on knowledge transition, knowledge stickiness, and knowledge gaps provided insight into some of the tools that might be helpful to maintain the level of stakeholder engagement following an executive leader's transition. In

business situations where the leadership change was completely devoid of knowledge transfer, stakeholders might not always be aware of the change and its direct impact on their experience (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). In the for-profit school industry, however, the executive leader at a local campus is often a mentor to all the stakeholders including executives, administrators, and students within the college (“Mentoring as Success and Retention Tool,” 2008). When the stakeholders are under the impression that a mentor has exited the institution with little or no explanation and changes in policies and procedures are happening rapidly, there is the potential for a negative impact on the stakeholders’ level of engagement (Chib, 2014). The purpose of this study was to understand the impact that a transition of leadership without knowledge transfer could have on the aforementioned stakeholders. Exploring the perceived impact of executive leadership change, without any knowledge transfer, on the level of stakeholder engagement at a for-profit college could be an avenue to determine whether knowledge transfer connects to that engagement leading to positive business outcomes for the institution (Shotter, 2011). One way to evaluate the level of stakeholder engagement was to conduct a study of the perception of change in engagement that the stakeholders might have had.

This literature review addressed knowledge transition and knowledge stickiness as well as the value of knowledge assets for creating and maintaining stakeholder engagement. The review also contained historical research on succession planning and the impact that it can have on the level of engagement of various stakeholders within an institution. The effect of stakeholder engagement on productivity outcomes in the for-profit college industry, specifically revenue, persistence, graduation, and placement, was

another topic of the historical research included in this review. The rate at which executive leadership transition without knowledge transfer, in the for-profit industry, occurs was an additional component of the research shared in the historical literature.

Overview of Knowledge Management

While knowledge management is a valuable element of the discipline of management, it is also a relatively recent concept within the academy of management disciplines. The study of knowledge management permits scholars and practitioners to understand how, when, and where knowledge workers of a given enterprise collect, store, manipulate, and apply a given institution's knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 2000). Knowledge management also allows researchers and managers to attempt to assign a value to the knowledge that an organization has acquired or needs to acquire as well as to understand what impact, if any at all, on the business operation might occur because knowledge has left the enterprise with the exit of an individual or knowledge has not yet entered the enterprise (Singh & Sharma, 2011). Knowledge exiting an institution can become costly for the organization in both time and financial resources.

Within the study of knowledge management, there are several sub disciplines. Those disciplines include information technology, social networking, human resources management & training, communities of practice, and document transfer (Chong, Chong, & Gan, 2011). Some elements of the information technology view of knowledge management also pertain to hardware, software, programming, and the generation of organizational knowledge through the application of these tools (Aktharsha, 2011). Information technology can be an essential part of managing knowledge within an organization (Rechberg & Syed, 2014). As an example, if stakeholders in the institution

have collected data, the firm needs to determine: where to store that data; the security surrounding the data; whether the data can become usable information; if the data have monetary value and what that value might be; when the data and its resulting information are no longer useful; whether and how to dispose of the data after its usefulness has expired (Hanley, 2014). All of these situations can require the use of information technology resources to manage the data and the collected knowledge with as much effectiveness and efficiency as possible.

Tacit and explicit knowledge. Aside from the information technology aspect of knowledge management, there is also the area of managing tacit and explicit knowledge within an organization that may or may not reside within a database or some other tool that would typically exist within an information technology infrastructure. As an example, there are cultural aspects of an institution that influence how stakeholders within the institution approach and conduct every internal process or procedure (Kamoche, Beise-Zee, & Mamman, 2014). Some knowledge management professionals refer to this subset of knowledge management as the organizational culture and structure (Rechberg & Syed, 2014). Knowledge that is a part of the organization can be particularly challenging for individuals to manage because much of it does not have an explicit description in any of the institution's records.

There are also normative aspects of policies, procedures and expected behaviors that employees and managers either understand tacitly as they work in the organization or learn about explicitly as they go about the business of conducting their work or managing the work of others. The term human resources practices may encompass these elements (Rechberg & Syed, 2014). Some of these knowledge management elements may be

visible in an organization's mission, vision, statement of purpose, or code of conduct (Iqbal, Toulson, & Tweed, 2015). While those elements may be present in an internal organizational database, their development, dissemination, and evaluation usually come under the purview of those who do not typically and specifically align with the information technology resources in an organization.

Evaluating knowledge management. Financial considerations are the metric for many if not most of the activities conducted by managers within organizations. The same is true for the determination of knowledge management tools and outcomes (Nonaka, Chia, Holt, & Peltokorpi, 2014). Unfortunately, for some organizations measuring the actual financial impact that the development and use of a specific knowledge management tool can provide is a complex task (Pekkan & Cihangir, 2014). In some situations, the knowledge management element of a specific business activity may not be something that an analyst or a manager can evaluate on its own merits (Salem, 2014). The outcomes that are visible to the manager through analysis and evaluation might appear in conjunction with other aspects of managing the business that may or may not have seemed enhanced due to knowledge management. In other situations, a manager could be sure of the value that knowledge management has had on a favorable or unfavorable business outcome, but the chain of knowledge use is not clear enough to make a connection that is acceptable to higher level managers who are looking for a direct, specific, certifiable financial connection (Singh, 2013). In some situations, direct attribution to a knowledge management resource is not available and there may be difficulty in convincing senior leadership of the value and importance of managing the organization's knowledge.

The costs associated with collecting and, in some cases, discarding then collecting the same information again for use in the knowledge management sector of an enterprise may be another concern for some managers and directors within an organization. If the value of knowledge that institutional agents have collected and stored is not a provable commodity to those who are responsible for budgeting and auditing the organization, then the senior and financial leadership might elect not to maintain those knowledge assets (Wong, Tan, Lee, & Wong, 2014). There may be some situations where those who are working with the knowledge understand its value and application, but do not have the appropriate tools to express that value effectively to others who make decisions about resources, expenses, and budgets (Soltanpanah & Vaisi, 2014). There may also be situations where appropriate explanations of the value of the knowledge assets are clear to the knowledge workers, but those who make decisions about the value and use of resources disagree with the value that the primary knowledge managers have placed on the knowledge assets (Dahgfous, Belkhadja, & Angell, 2013). This leads to concerns about collecting and maintaining the right types of knowledge to propel a business forward whether that business is in growth mode or sustainability mode.

The discipline of knowledge management has its origins in firms attempting to maximize their effectiveness through the use of existing practices, norms, and ideas but lacking information about specifics on those items within the firm or within the expertise of the firm's employees. In an effort to qualify and quantify what employees of the firm had collected in the form of knowledge assets, some firms identified an individual or a team of individuals who have responsibility for identifying, categorizing, maintaining, and updating the knowledge that is relevant or could be relevant to the operations of the

firm (Tzortzaki & Mihiotis, 2014). In smaller firms, this task is likely to be somewhat simpler because of the limited number of sources and storage locations for the knowledge that pertained to the operation of the firm (Tzortzaki & Mihiotis, 2014). The use of explicit knowledge in smaller firms means that quantifying the knowledge assets can be more manageable for an individual or a team of individuals to accomplish (Connelly, Zweig, Webster, & Trougakos, 2012). The tacit knowledge that is a part of how a firm conducts its primary business function can be the more challenging aspect of managing the knowledge assets that exist within an organization (Wang, Noe, & Wang, 2014). Enticing a knowledge manager to work with tacit knowledge requires said manager to be aware of the types of tacit knowledge, within the institution, that are integral to how the firm operates as efficiently and profitably as possible.

In larger organizations, where the knowledge workers may be responsible for distributing information throughout various business units or silos, the calculation of knowledge assets, their replication or loss and their value to the organization can become extraordinarily difficult for knowledge managers to document. The qualification and quantification of these assets in a larger organization with several employees tasked with producing data, information, and knowledge about different aspects of the firm's outputs is something that requires systems and infrastructure support (Pandey & Dutta, 2013). Sometimes, the senior leadership of the organization does not fully commit to paying the cost in dollars, human resources, and productivity load for managing knowledge effectively (Massingham & Massingham, 2014). In instances where the organization's leadership is willing and ready to cover those costs and absorb the potential initial loss of productivity, there is still the issue of identifying tacit knowledge, which is extremely

difficult to collect and document (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012). This difficulty stems primarily from the way that institutions store and share their tacit knowledge. Typically, institutions store their tacit knowledge within the thoughts of individuals, when those individuals share that tacit knowledge it comes across with individual biases and opinions.

In smaller organizations, managers and leaders may opt to share knowledge through simple word of mouth protocols. They may also create a community of practice where information is readily available to everyone who might have a need for a specific data point or method of accomplishing a task (Pattinson & Preece, 2014). Typically, smaller organizations have less infrastructure around how knowledge individuals within the firm collect and store the institution's knowledge, so the knowledge management that does occur is somewhat spontaneous; lacking any direction or advanced planning (Pattinson & Preece, 2014). In those situations, it is likely that the transition of knowledge from one individual to the next occurs sporadically without any formal management techniques or strategies (Tuan, 2012). Informal knowledge transfer can be very helpful when looking at tacit knowledge assets. As an example, sharing cultural information about an organization is something that may be difficult or awkward to describe in a manual or an email, but those who are responsible for the knowledge sharing may do so more readily through conversation or observation, even though their sharing efforts may contain biases and opinions as a part of the knowledge transfer. In organizations with stronger interpersonal relationships among the employees, the opportunity to leverage social capital as a means of conveying the nuances of internal communication might be more readily available to new leaders entering the work

environment (Yen, Tseng & Wang, 2015). Even when considering explicit knowledge assets in smaller organizations, the dissemination of pieces of knowledge that stakeholders have collected might be a more streamlined process because there are fewer individuals involved in vetting the information that knowledge workers share and in distributing it to any newly arrived leaders or managers within the organization (Sankowska, 2013). This might lead to better knowledge sharing in smaller organizations.

Knowledge Attrition

Institutions have invested in managing the knowledge created within the firm through various methods. This investment is a means of maintaining the value that knowledge workers can extract from the knowledge assets that may exist within an institution (Chandra, Iyer, & Raman, 2015). When knowledge assets exit an institution, such as individuals who have accumulated knowledge or elements of documentation that hold knowledge, the organization suffers that loss and may have to find a way to replace the lost information (Hokanson, Sosa-Fey, & Vinaja, 2011). Rather than risking the loss of knowledge, some institutions have determined that creating a pathway for the transfer of information is more time and cost effective for all members of the firm (Moradi, 2014). This is why knowledge transfer can be such an important aspect of managing knowledge within a firm (Massingham, 2014). The following frameworks are foundational to managing and maintaining knowledge within institutions in a manner that demonstrates value to the leadership of the firm.

Knowledge gaps. Knowledge gaps may form when knowledge transfer steps and protocols are not already in place within an organization. Creating a knowledge transfer plan, particularly in organizations where transfer occurs frequently and with little or no

notice, is one method that could assist organizations with reducing the likelihood of creating unexpected knowledge gaps within the organization (Peet, 2012). Some of the steps and protocols that an organization might establish to reduce the likelihood of knowledge gaps and increase the potential for consistent knowledge transfer involve creating communities of practice and developing a set of practices that discourage knowledge stickiness within the organization.

Knowledge gaps are sometimes difficult to measure and may not even be noticeable to the stakeholders who are working around them. It is entirely possible for stakeholders to be unaware of what they do not know and therefore unconcerned about closing the knowledge gap (Novak, 1998). When succession occurs in organizations, the risk of a new stakeholder not being aware of knowledge that he or she should have may become even greater because other stakeholders believe that the tacit knowledge of the institution automatically passes on to new stakeholders (Wiig, 1999). Due to the highly variable nature of knowledge gaps, institutions where a learning culture is in place and thriving generally contain stakeholders who work to minimize knowledge gaps as much as possible (Afsar, 2016). One potential cause of knowledge gaps, particularly for new stakeholders may come from knowledge hoarding and hiding in institutions.

Knowledge hoarding and hiding. In some institutions, both the tacit and explicit knowledge elements are not readily identifiable to employees and managers in the firm. This can happen when those who have the knowledge elements are, intentionally or unintentionally, withholding them from their co-workers (Connelly, et al., 2012). Some historical research on the theory of knowledge management has demonstrated that knowledge transfer within institutions can have interruptions due to knowledge hoarding,

knowledge hiding, knowledge loss, and misattribution of knowledge assets within a firm (Wu, 2013). In the career college industry, rapid, repetitive change in executive leadership can cause tacit knowledge loss that could potentially be detrimental to the satisfaction level of stakeholders who are a part of the career college when the tacit knowledge disappears.

The theory of knowledge gaps also addresses knowledge transfer within organizations. In situations where the available knowledge does not meet the required knowledge assets to address situations or circumstances that a leader faces, the organization has a knowledge gap (Novak, 1998). Typically, it is a leader's responsibility to determine the most effective and efficient path to close the knowledge gap so that the leader can address and remedy those situations (Novak, 1998). Unfortunately, when an executive leader is new to the firm, he or she may not be aware that a knowledge gap exists. If the outgoing leader did not transfer any knowledge to the incoming leader, then the knowledge gap is likely to widen before the new leader has an opportunity to close it (Alipour, Idris, & Karimi, 2011). Mitigating the knowledge gap can provide an opportunity for a new leader to have more effective outcomes in terms of performance such as revenue, persistence, graduation, and placement. It can be quite difficult to mitigate that knowledge gap; however, if there is not a mechanism to transfer the knowledge that would apply to those issues within the organization (Martin-Perez, Martin-Cruz, & Estrada-Vaquero, 2012). In the case of a for-profit college, performance comes from revenue, persistence, graduation, and job placement because these activities are what dictate the success of an institution. Maintenance of a body of knowledge is a

requirement for the institution to deliver on the required outcomes for those performance elements.

Potential remedies for knowledge hoarding and hiding. The development of communities of practice is a tool that can create a passageway for knowledge to travel between colleagues as well as between past, present, and future executive leaders. Communities of practice, or teams, can be particularly helpful in maintaining and increasing tacit knowledge about topics that are difficult to document effectively (Post, 2012). It is important to note that creating a team that is a community of practice requires consideration of the individual stakeholders and each person's ability to be a truly cooperative contributor to the knowledge sharing objectives (Post, 2012). An example of the type of information that a community of practice could support very well would be the development of a method to involve stakeholders in activities that keep them engaged and focused on achieving the primary outcomes for the institution (DelGiudice, Peruta, & Maggioni, 2013). It is also important to recognize stakeholders when they exhibit outstanding performance leading to great outcomes (DelGiudice, et al., 2013). While it is possible to document the process for this type of involvement, the enthusiasm, energy, and celebration of recognition for the stakeholders at a small for-profit college is something that a community of practice may describe more effectively than a written document or even a detailed conversation between one leader and his or her successor.

Knowledge transfer. Beyond maintaining the knowledge that knowledge workers have already collected within an organization, there is the loss of productivity that can occur when appropriate knowledge elements are absent from an organization. There are multiple approaches to the concept of knowledge transfer. One approach is

evident in situations where individuals or groups who have garnered knowledge within one context, then apply that same knowledge in a different context to resolve a separate problem or situation (Novak, 1998). Another approach that aligns more with institutions is transferring knowledge from one individual or group to another individual or group as a means of diffusing innovation, or to close any gaps created by succession within an institution (Nakanishi, 2014). If knowledge does not transfer within an organization from an outgoing knowledge worker to an incoming knowledge worker, then a knowledge gap is the by-product of the lack of knowledge transfer (Deepak, 2011). Knowledge transfer is also valuable because it can create an environment between multiple knowledge managers who can build upon the knowledge that has transferred and develop additional knowledge assets for the organization (Ng & Jee, 2014). Without the knowledge transfer, there is an opportunity for those who are new to the organization or new in their role to create new and different knowledge assets that do not align with the organization's goals and objectives (Ghandi & Kumar, 2014). The lack of alignment when knowledge transfer is not present could become a larger problem when the knowledge that has not transferred is tacit rather than explicit in nature (Pitra & Zauskova, 2014). When tacit knowledge does not transfer from one knowledge worker to another, there is risk to the culture and mission of the organization because individuals who are following the explicit requirements listed in an employee handbook or instruction manual may opt to follow those requirements in a manner that does not fit the organizational perspective on how to conduct those job duties.

Communities of practice. While communities of practice are a tool that knowledge workers can use to great effect as a means of collecting and transferring

information within an organization, it is important to see them as distinct from the social networks through which knowledge workers might share other types of information. In some institutions, the social networks that exist among all employees at all levels, notwithstanding hierarchical barriers, can be an invaluable means of knowledge sharing (Caimo & Lomi, 2015). In addition to forming these social networks, some institutions can apply them to the concept of creating dialogue and enhancing the opportunities for employees to share best practices as well as initiate conversation, tell stories, and communicate about their experiences within the institution (“Knowledge Management and Business Strategy,” 2015). Despite networks of this type being an important part of stemming knowledge attrition, they are somewhat different from the formal creation of communities of practice within an organization.

Minimizing knowledge attrition in institutions when succession occurs without a specific plan for either succession or knowledge transfer is one potential benefit of communities of practice. In some institutions, the senior leaders establish these communities and in so doing, the senior leaders use the key concepts of identity, participation, and governance (Macpherson & Antonacopoulou, 2013). Establishment of communities of practice within a career college based on identification of appropriate participants, effective contributions from all participants, and effective governance of knowledge collection, evaluation, and dissemination could provide several benefits to the institution. Some of those benefits include improved learning and knowledge sharing as well as the increased likelihood of employees within the institution innovating and improving productivity based on knowledge gleaned through active participation in a community of practice (Lee, Reinicke, Sarcar, & Anderson, 2015). An additional benefit

of planned communities of practice might also be the establishment of mentor/mentee relationships through those communities (Curtis & Taylor, 2018). Relationships that come out of communities of practice or mentor/mentee arrangements are another important element in sharing institutional knowledge. Creation of a formal community of practice within an institution is one approach that could capitalize on inherent social networks and build upon the knowledge that exists within an institution to enhance application of the available knowledge as a means of improving outcomes.

While the establishment of communities of practice seems highly advisable, there are some potential risks associated with this approach to managing knowledge and attempting to reduce the potential of knowledge attrition. One of the primary risks is that despite an institution's best attempts at reducing knowledge attrition, if all the institution's knowledge resides within a community of practice, or more specifically within certain members of that community, the exodus of those individuals from the institution could create a knowledge drain (Lee, Suh, & Lee, 2014). Despite this risk, communities of practice can be extremely useful in sharing tacit knowledge within institutions through diffusion of that knowledge among the individuals who participate in the community of practice. (Lee, Suh, & Lee, 2014). The knowledge that exits from institutions during succession without knowledge transfer or succession planning may be mostly tacit in nature (DeGuidice, Peruta, & Maggioni, 2013a). Diffusion of tacit knowledge within an institution is the most logical rationale for instituting communities of practice in institutions that have executive succession without knowledge transfer.

Stakeholder Engagement

In the case of career colleges, the stakeholders who are likely to have the greatest effects through knowledge transfer or conversely knowledge attrition are the executives who are in the succession process, the administrators who report to those executives and the faculty members who are in consistent contact with the student population. A viable synonym for stakeholder engagement in this situation would be employee engagement (DelGuidice, Peruta, & Maggioni, 2013b). Employee engagement is a relatively new concept in the field of management and has had a lot of traction since 2009 when human resources and operations managers began exploring what it is and how employee engagement can benefit institutions (Rana, Ardichvili, & Tkachenko, 2014). Chief among the research assertions and findings is that employee engagement, which researchers say is both an attitude and a behavior, can be the impetus for improved performance and institutional outcomes (Agrawal, 2015). A description of employee engagement is a strong relationship between employee and employer where both entities within the relationship believe that the other party in the relationship is meeting their needs relative to the relationship (Brajer-Marczak, 2014). One of the most effective ways of meeting those needs can be identifying and supplying the training necessary for knowledge workers to be successful in their roles (Park, Kang, & Kim, 2017). Further, the training that happens with employees should occur consistently and deliberately with areas of focus that pertain to technical skills as well as soft skills (Ocen, Francis, & Angundaru, 2017). Placing a specific focus on delivering this type of training to employees can provide a greater degree of engagement and commitment to the institution. Because employee engagement is such an important part of outcomes such as revenue,

persistence, graduation, and placements rates, it may be logical to connect employee engagement to knowledge transfer; likewise, it may be logical to connect a lack of employee engagement to a lack of knowledge transfer.

One perspective is that there is a cyclical approach to knowledge transfer and employee engagement. Additionally, there is the concept that employees can be disengaged specifically from the acts related to knowledge sharing or knowledge transfer (Ford, Myrden, & Jones, 2015). This type of specific disengagement might be a precursor to a broader absence of engagement between a stakeholder and the institution, because there is little focus on developing the stakeholders to their fullest potential within the institution (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Beyond the idea that stakeholder engagement increases the likelihood of knowledge transfer, knowledge transfer can also increase the likelihood of stakeholder engagement. Included in this description of knowledge transfer is a clear understanding of what the position expectations are and what tools are required to achieve those expectations (Medlin & Green, 2014). Because of the nature of knowledge required to be effective and potentially successful in an executive role, there may be a significant quantity of knowledge requiring transfer that is tacit in nature. Figure 4 below is my interpretation of the cyclical nature of knowledge transfer and stakeholder engagement in institutions.

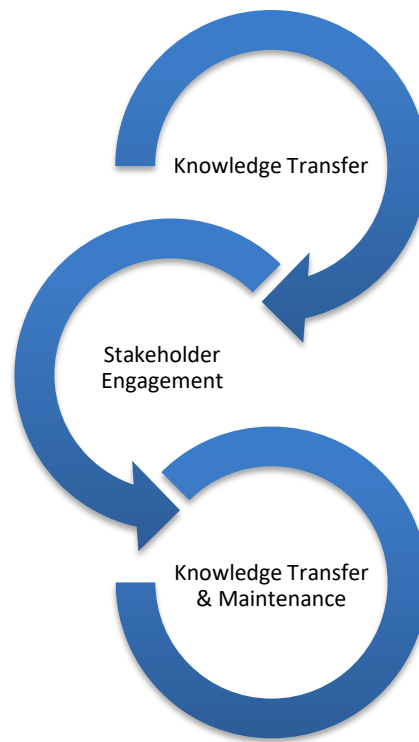


Figure 4. Relationship between knowledge transfer and stakeholder engagement.

Importance of stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder or employee engagement can be a key to an institution's successful performance. Having stakeholders who are fully engaged in the work that they are doing can contribute to a decrease in attrition, loyal and satisfied clients, profitability, and productivity (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014). For career colleges, engaged stakeholders could lead to improvement in the key metrics of revenue, persistence, graduation, and placement (Reina, Rogers, Peterson, Byron, & Hom, 2018). The apparent value of stakeholder engagement for institutional success would seem to suggest that the inverse: absence of employee engagement could have significant negative consequences for the successful operation of an institution (Radda, Majidadi, & Akanno, 2015). In some cases, there may be a direct connection between low employee engagement and a low managerial competence (Leary et al, 2013). When

managers lack competence, potentially due to no succession plan or knowledge transfer, there is a risk that employee engagement might suffer, which could lead to a decrease in institutional outcomes.

Counteracting a decline in employee engagement could be one way to bolster knowledge transfer within institutions that have succession without prior planning. If individuals who are stakeholders in an institution are fully committed to the institution and engaged in the work that they do, they may find more reasons to share important, tacit pieces of knowledge with incoming leaders, which could promote improved institutional performance (Fernandez-Lopez, Rodeiro-Pazos, Calvo, & Rodriguez-Guilias, 2018). This type of knowledge sharing and transfer has the potential to assist the incoming leader with understanding more about the institution and how to guide and direct the activities within it to drive positive outcomes. Alternatively, if the employees in the organization are less than engaged, they may have little or no incentive to share either tacit or explicit pieces of knowledge with the incoming executive, possibly leading to knowledge attrition from the institution.

Evaluating stakeholder engagement. One tool for understanding the level of employee engagement within an institution could be employee engagement surveys. These surveys can provide insight to an institution's leadership regarding how employees feel about the jobs that they are doing as well as the leaders and the institution as a whole. Although, by design, these types of surveys safeguard employee anonymity, there may still be some reluctance to provide information on engagement surveys because employees are concerned about the possibility of retaliation if their responses are not favorable to managers or the institution. While employee engagement surveys are a

useful tool, there are other tools that can also provide information on the level of stakeholder engagement.

Exit interviews permit the institution to understand the drivers behind why employees choose to leave an organization. In situations where the exit is not voluntary, exit interviews may also provide some information regarding how stakeholders have responded to the leadership, mission, and values of the institution. The use of an exit interview tool as a method for collecting information from stakeholders can supply senior leaders of an institution with information and trends that can assist with increasing the level of stakeholder engagement, which could lead to a culture that is more open to knowledge learning and sharing for all who work at a given institution.

Knowledge Management and Stakeholder Engagement

Because of the potential for improved outcomes that can come from effective stakeholder engagement, it might be helpful to explore how knowledge management, including knowledge transfer as compared to knowledge attrition can influence the level of engagement that stakeholders tend to have in institutions with unplanned executive succession. There are several components of knowledge management that contribute to stakeholder engagement. Some of these elements include a clear understanding of the duties and expectations in the role that an individual holds within an institution and acclimation to the cultural expectations within the institution (Javadi & Ahmadi, 2013). In situations when executive succession occurs without previous planning and with no knowledge transfer, the essential ingredients for cultivating stakeholder engagement for both the new executive and the existing employees are typically absent (Klein & Salk, 2013). Finding pathways to create a viable method for knowledge transfer in unplanned

succession may assist in either developing or increasing employee engagement, which can contribute positively to future knowledge sharing.

Stakeholder engagement has a significant potential to increase productivity and outcomes in institutions. There are several elements of stakeholder engagement that could potentially have an impact on an institution's performance due to increased client satisfaction, which should produce better profitability results (Jauhari, Sehgal, & Sehgal, 2013). In career colleges, it is important that an executive leader has a clear understanding of the cultural and organizational norms as well as a willingness to apply that understanding to produce high levels of client satisfaction (Yusoff, McLeay, & Woodruffe-Burton, 2015). Client satisfaction is key to producing positive outcomes for the institution because it leads to improvements in the main performance indicators of revenue, persistence, graduation, and placement (Chib, 2014). One effective tool that institutions can apply to establish a learning organization that promotes knowledge sharing and leads to highly engaged stakeholders within the institution is to establish a succession planning protocol.

Succession Planning

Planning for successors in an executive role is something that many colleges and universities have difficulty doing. Frequently, there is no plan in place for the next leader or for the next person to fill a slot that reports directly to the leader of the institution (Klein & Salk, 2013). The absence of a succession plan can lead to several problems with managing the accumulated knowledge that assists with productivity in the institution (Babu, 2013). Succession planning is important because it creates a pathway for knowledge transfer before the next executive leader assumes all authority in a role (Hall-

Ellis, 2015). In circumstances where all parties clearly understand the succession plan, there may be ample opportunity for the incoming leader to collect much of the tacit and explicit knowledge that is important for execution of duties in the role (Nakauchi & Wiersema, 2015). If a situation with that opportunity for knowledge transfer to occur is in place, due to the existence of a succession plan, then the process of initiation, implementation, ramp up, and implementation can be a matter of course for the institution (Gawlik, 2015). In the absence of succession planning, the process of knowledge transfer does not have specific parameters that allow for consistency in knowledge sharing (Rodrigues, Borges, & Aleixo, 2014). Especially in urban schools or schools that provide for underserved populations, succession planning is important for the stability of the leadership which contributes to positive student outcomes (Peters-Hawkins, Reed, & Kingsberry, 2017). When an institution has a working succession plan, there may be fewer concerns regarding culture and relationships with the incoming leader because he or she is already a part of the institution and has significant familiarity with the institutional norms and customs.

Stakeholder engagement is another potentially meaningful outcome that can be the result of effective succession planning. In circumstances where the employees of an institution know that there is a plan for each person's eventual succession into a different role, the employees may have a higher degree of commitment to and engagement in the activities of the institution (Santora & Bozer, 2015). The existence of a succession plan that leaders share, in some part, with employees who will need to engage in knowledge management for the institution can provide a viable reason in the minds of the employees for participating in knowledge transfer activities (Long, Johnson, Faught, & Street, 2013).

Stakeholders who understand how the institution is likely to evolve and develop based on who is in leadership and who believe they have a stake in the institution's success may have a higher degree of engagement with the idea of succession as well as with the institution as a whole (Lee, 2015). Even in cases where succession planning occurs with regularity, without including major stakeholders in the succession planning and gaining their acceptance of the plan, the succession might not yield the anticipated results (Yadav & Shankar, 2017). Insuring that stakeholders are aware of plans for their individual future contributions to the institution and for succession across the entire institution could be an effective means of driving stakeholder engagement to higher levels.

Unfortunately, stakeholder engagement and minimizing knowledge attrition is frequently not enough of an incentive for institutions to create, apply, and monitor, with deliberation, a succession plan for their executive leaders. Senior leaders in some institutions have attempted to work on succession planning but have found that it requires time and resources that are in short supply and they need to focus on the immediate requirements to achieve performance metrics (Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito, & Bassi, 2015). Other leaders have opted to allow the human resources team to work on succession without providing much input to the planning (Church, 2014). Although the practice of human resource management is an essential element in succession planning, the individuals who manage that element of an institution may not have the specific details of who would be the most effective fit in a specific role due to factors beyond experience, expertise and education; thus, the succession plans that stakeholders create do not produce action items that senior executives are willing to implement (Walker & Forbes, 2014). Even in those institutions where succession planning occurs because the

institutional leaders consider, address, and start the process there may be significant roadblocks. If the succession planning is a relatively new endeavor for the institution and turnover occurs before all the succession planning elements are complete, there may be resistance to continuing and completing the succession planning because it appears that the effort did not accomplish the objective due to the timing of employee departure (Mutunga & Gachunga, 2013). The appearance of succession not being effective because employees depart is important in situations where employees leave for reasons other than anticipated retirement. In the career college industry, a specific institution's performance in comparison to the expected metrics might dictate that a leader who is not meeting those metrics loses his or her position for lack of performance or chooses to resign to avoid termination. The iterative turnover that can occur in those situations makes the creation of an effective succession plan particularly challenging.

Review of Available Research Methodologies

There were myriad methods available to study knowledge management, knowledge transfer, knowledge attrition, and succession. Several studies included the use of various qualitative and quantitative tools to determine how well knowledge has traversed the divide from knowledge worker to knowledge worker within a given institution. Some of the methods included: regression analysis, chi-square analysis, phenomenology, ethnography, and case study. The following is a description of some of the literature that explains these methodologies and how their application can help to illuminate topics in knowledge transfer during succession.

Initially, I considered using archival student surveys as the primary data source for this study. During the time of executive succession, students took satisfaction surveys

before and after new leaders, without knowledge transfer, became executives at their career college. The satisfaction surveys included Likert Scale questions about satisfaction and would have provided several dependent variables for evaluation. The independent variable in this situation would be the change in executive leader. The number of available survey responses was greater than 100 for the time period before and the time period after the executive changed, so regression could have been a useful tool (Vis, 2012). Because regression could provide information on correlation and causality, this might have been a useful tool for understanding how the student population responded to rapid executive succession without knowledge transfer (Vis, 2012). In this case, however, all of the data was anonymous without any method of directly correlating before and after responses, so this method was not applicable.

With the before and after student satisfaction surveys there existed two separate populations. Those two populations were: the group of students who took the survey before the change in leadership and the group of students who took the survey after the change in leadership. Chi-square testing might have been a way to determine if the observed population satisfaction in the before group matched or did not match the expected population satisfaction in the after group (Franke, Ho, & Christie, 2012). In other words, whether there was a goodness of fit or not between before and after interpretations of satisfaction. (Franke, et al., 2012). While the two sets of data could have represented two populations, there was overlap and the loss of some participants from one collection to the next. Additionally, the participant selection methodologies were not clear because the data was archival, so this methodology did not apply.

Because knowledge transfer and succession can occur as a significant event or a phenomenon in the life of an institution, phenomenology was one approach that might have proven useful for this type of research. Previous studies that have evaluated knowledge transfer used phenomenology as a research method because it encapsulates so many details regarding the activities in the knowledge transfer process (Bengoa & Kaufmann, 2014). While phenomenology could have been very helpful for understanding how all stakeholders who experienced executive succession without knowledge transfer in a group of career colleges felt about the phenomenon, most of the students who experienced the impact were graduates at the onset of the research project and would not have been available to provide information for the phenomenological study.

Ethnography, and in particular institutional ethnography, was another consideration for this type of research. The group of individuals who experienced the changes in the career colleges because of executive succession without knowledge transfer formed a set of potential research participants that was the result of institutional actors and actions (Billo & Mountz, 2016). Despite the existence, at one time, of an ethnography that the executive succession without knowledge transfer created in the career colleges, that ethnography was no longer available for study because the career college group filed for bankruptcy and no longer existed when the research project started.

Because the other methodological approaches would not work for this study due to an absence of correlation or the dissolution of the institution, an exploratory case study using contemporary input from the individuals who were present during the executive succession seemed appropriate. Through an exploratory case study approach, I was able

to use my understanding of the situation to inform the research (Patton, 2015). This type of research methodology allowed for deeper questions about perception, impression, and reaction by most of the individuals who worked through the succession period (Patton, 2015). Exploratory case study also permitted interaction with a smaller group of participants, which yielded more in-depth understanding of how the subjects responded to the executive succession without knowledge transfer.

Summary

In summary, knowledge sharing and transition are important elements for the creation of a learning institution. Frequently, an institution's internal and/or organizational knowledge suffers from stickiness and does not move from one executive to another when there is change in leadership. The absence of knowledge transfer or knowledge stickiness can lead to a decrease in employee engagement with the institution, which may be a precursor to decreased performance. Succession planning could be an overarching strategy that would provide a framework for knowledge transfer, employee engagement and a springboard for improving performance outcomes. In the education industry, however, succession planning rarely happens even with the knowledge that senior leaders are planning to retire soon. In the for-profit career college sector of the education industry, turnover of executive leaders can occur unexpectedly due to lack of performance or more enticing job opportunities; thus, the absence of succession planning in those institutions could create even more difficulty with knowledge transfer and employee engagement. While the literature does address the topics of knowledge sharing, knowledge attrition, employee engagement and succession planning, there is a very little

research on the specific impact that these factors may have in the for-profit career college industry specifically.

Because for-profit career colleges tend to be smaller institutions in comparison to community colleges and universities, the available population for exploring the impact of no knowledge transfer is smaller. The size of the institutions as well as the concept of stakeholder/employee engagement were factors that indicated an approach through a bounded case study where stakeholders' perceptions of knowledge transfer during executive succession came through semistructured interviews. The methods for collecting and analyzing information from those stakeholders have a full description in chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to understand how the absence of knowledge transfer and succession planning may impact stakeholder engagement when a change in executive leadership occurs at a career college. I assessed the level of stakeholder engagement by using data gathered through semistructured interviews with executives, administrators, and faculty members. Understanding the roles that knowledge transfer, knowledge gaps, and knowledge stickiness play in a career college executive's ability to keep all stakeholders engaged is a good first step for improving career college operational performance, which may lead to a continuing growth pattern for the business. This chapter describes the research design and rationale for exploring how stakeholders responded to a lack of knowledge transfer during executive transition in a career college. The chapter also describes the methodology for the study, including population selection, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Finally, this chapter addresses issues of trustworthiness with the study as well as with the exploratory case study methodology as it applied to the situation reviewed for this specific project.

Research Design and Rationale

The overarching question was the following: How does the lack of knowledge transfer during executive leadership succession at a career college influence stakeholder engagement? The secondary question was the following: How does the absence of knowledge transfer among career college executives impede succession in a career college? The secondary question did not appear to have an answer after an exhaustive search of the literature pertaining to executive succession planning in career colleges. Because this question and this type of study were both initiating the inquiry into the topic,

the generalized research approach could be considered as exploratory (Yin, 2014). Exploratory research can sometimes be a method for setting up a larger and more in-depth study planned for a later date (Berg & Lune, 2012). In the business and management discipline, exploration can often enhance research due to the facility and flexibility of the exploration process permitting more precise operational definitions and better research (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Because the overarching research question begins with *how*, the study easily fits into the realm of exploration, and the findings could help me to develop more precise questions for research projects that have greater depth and breadth (Neuman, 2011). It is possible that the findings from this exploratory research plan could be the seedling for future research regarding executive succession planning and knowledge transfer in career colleges (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2014). In the interim, the current gap in the available research appeared to necessitate an exploration of how the individuals and institutions impacted by knowledge attrition through unplanned succession might respond. The above-mentioned factors all contributed to a research rationale and design that centered on exploring aspects of the issue of knowledge transfer, knowledge management, and executive succession practices that may or may not lead to an issue with knowledge attrition for incoming executives.

The concept of case study is one that has proven to be somewhat difficult to define. A part of that difficulty comes from the perception that case study could be either an actual research methodology or a framework for looking at research that evolved from using various other types of methodology (Merriam, 2009). In some situations, case study refers to the manner and type of data collection and the types of analyses that a researcher conducts on the collected data (Hammersley, 2004). There are also other definitions of

case study, including an in-depth review of an individual or group of individuals where a researcher does not manipulate specific variables and the information collected has thick description (Beins & McCarthy, 2012). The case study methodology is a research approach that is common in the social sciences, to wit, management and knowledge management (Yin, 2014). The application of case study methodology to a research problem indicates that the researcher can ensure that specific, descriptive characteristics are true of the research project, including interpretive, experiential, situational, personalistic, well triangulated, and well informed (Stake, 2010). These characteristics may work well in a situation that is a bounded case, which Merriam (2009) described as an entity or a single unit around which separation lines exist to divorce the primary subject of the study from other areas of potential consideration. A case study involves conducting research using various tools such as observations, interviews, or collection of documents from the units or individuals within that bounded system. The research questions in this study came from a bounded system, which was a foundational reason for using a case study method of inquiring about knowledge transfer.

Combining an exploratory approach with the case study methodology produces an exploratory case study. In an exploratory case study, the researcher has an opportunity to apply both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods (Streb, 2010). Exploratory case study can be useful for the creation of additional theories and hypotheses as well as for the potential generalization of lessons learned based on the outcome of the case study (Streb, 2010). One of the specific benefits of exploratory case study is the ability of a researcher employing this methodology to look at a phenomenon in its original context and draw lessons from that context rather than having to base information on an

alternative context. Using the original context can be particularly effective when the researcher applies experiential knowledge to addressing the research questions (Maxwell, 2013). Taking an exploratory approach to reviewing a bounded case where a contemporary phenomenon had occurred that involved evaluating the phenomenon using interviews and collected documents was an effective method for answering the question of how executive succession without knowledge transfer has an impact on newly hired executives in a career college setting.

Prior to settling on the exploratory case study method as the tool with which I could obtain an answer to the question of how the absence of knowledge transfer in executive succession can influence a newly installed executive, I reviewed and considered some other methodologies. Because executive succession is a phenomenon that several individuals within a given institution can experience either simultaneously or separately, phenomenology was a consideration for this project. In particular, hermeneutical phenomenology, which focuses on the researcher's interpretation of the lived experiences of the research subjects, would have been applicable to this study (Merriam, 2009). This approach could have been advantageous because the deep connection that I might have developed with the subjects could have led to a thicker and more richly detailed description of the research topic (Maxwell, 2013). Due to the requirement of participating in a lived experience, and the fact that the phenomenon in this specific location was no longer present, this methodology was not the most effective choice for this study.

Ethnography was an additional type of study under consideration because the executives, faculty, and staff within the bounded case were all considered as part of a

cultural group or community (Sullivan, 2009). The language, cultural norms, and practices within the bounded case of a career college are all part and parcel of the knowledge that is a part of executive succession (Intintoli, 2013). Although this study was contemporary, the succession had occurred in the recent past and was not occurring concurrently with the research project, so ethnography was not a viable option for this study because of the amount of interaction between the researcher and the community that this approach would have required.

Exploring the impact of knowledge attrition on stakeholders, as in this case, was a research path that could lead neatly to an exploratory case study. In situations where a researcher is trying to gain understanding about human behavior and what might underpin the actions that individuals take during knowledge transition or attrition, this type of qualitative approach could provide illumination (Salkind, 2012). When looking at a research problem resting on the foundation of two existing conceptual models, the single case study was one avenue that could provide either refutation or support for those models through evaluation of the elements of the case (Mariotto, Zanni, & Moraes, 2014). The situation from which the research questions came and the level of depth required to respond to the research questions also gave credence to the use of a single case study for this research project (Maxwell, 2013). Lastly, the history, experience, skill set, and sensitivity to the situation that a researcher has could lend depth and nuance to the meaning of information collected in a case study (Patton, 2015). These factors, in combination, were the basis for selecting the exploratory case study method to address the research questions.

Role of the Researcher

In this research, my role was that of observer. The pool of potential participants for this case study research included executives, administrators, and faculty members who worked within a group of three career colleges in Central New Jersey between July 2013 and April 2014. I was an employee with this group of career colleges during that time frame and did have a managerial or administrative relationship with the individuals who were stakeholders. As of April 2015, however, any relationship involving power over participants dissolved due to my departure from the organization. At the time of interaction between myself and the potential participants in the research, no relationship involving regular or consistent contact existed.

The potential for researcher bias due to a power relationship was no longer an issue due to any power relationships having concluded before the research started. My previous relationships with the study participants could have led to concerns about ethical issues in the collection of responses. While there may have been concerns that my experiential knowledge could have produced bias in the research outcomes, I would argue that the incorporation of my knowledge and experience into the research project provided a stronger framework for collecting data and creating an analysis of those data (Maxwell, 2013). Addressing research bias as well as the concluded power relationships was the approach that I used to minimize any ethical issues associated with collected data from individuals who were formerly in a work relationship with me.

In that my work relationships with the potential participants in the study had concluded, there was no conflict of interest. Further, because the career colleges in which executive succession without knowledge transfer occurred had since closed, there was no

opportunity for participants in the case to interact in the workplace causing additional conflicts of interest. To make sure that the participants in the study had a sense of confidence that their ideas and opinions were confidential, I explained the anonymity of their responses and how the information would appear in the study's final results and recommendations. I reinforced the absence of any current or future working relationship in discussion with the potential participants prior to beginning any portion of the semistructured interview process with them.

To address any research bias arising from knowledge of my prior work relationships, I used a standardized semistructured interview protocol. The semistructured interview tool is currently in broad use, so there was no need for a pilot study to ensure that the tool provided appropriate information for the research questions. The questions on the semistructured interview tool were open ended, with the opportunity for further discussion of each response, and they addressed knowledge transfer, knowledge attrition, and employee engagement. The topics that the semistructured interview tool addressed aligned nicely with the research questions in this study. The semistructured interviews occurred through UberConference, which is a free web-based video-conferencing service with recording capabilities. I recorded each semistructured interview and transcribed the recorded interview after it had been completed. One step in the data collection and analysis process involved debriefing the participants after completion of the interviews and allowing them to review the interview transcript to validate that their responses were what they intended to share regarding the subject matter of the semistructured interviews. At the conclusion of the project, each of the participants received a description of the findings from the research.

Methodology

The following is a description of the methodology that I applied to the exploratory case study on the effect that lack of knowledge transfer might have on executive succession. The design of this methodology included semistructured interviews to collect information on stakeholder perceptions of executive succession at a career college. The methodology also included providing potential participants with a preliminary questionnaire in advance of conducting the semistructured interviews with them so that both the questionnaire responses and the semistructured interview responses were part of the data collection and analysis process. I conducted the semistructured interviews using a web-based computer application that could record the audio from the semistructured interviews. This web-based application was free for the participants and allowed me to reconnect with each participant if the audio was interrupted in the middle of the semistructured interview. I used a software tool to convert the recorded audio from the semistructured interviews into a transcribed document format. Each recorded and transcribed semistructured interview went through NVivo software analysis so that I could identify trends and themes that were similar across several research participants.

Participant Selection Logic

The essential area of study for this research topic was the absence of knowledge, or more precisely, knowledge attrition during executive succession in a career college. Colleges and universities rarely have a presidential succession plan in place, which can cause concerns about knowledge attrition when executive leaders depart the college (Klein & Salk, 2013). It is a good idea in any management situation to create a succession plan to allow the continuation of knowledge development and application; unfortunately,

leaders in many institutions are either reluctant to develop a plan or do so in only a perfunctory manner (Brooks, 2014). Having a formalized succession planning process can create future leaders for the institution who have gained knowledge and experience about the organization and its mission, values and, culture (Calareso, 2013). Regrettably, without a succession plan, there is no opportunity for knowledge sharing or knowledge transfer, which presents significant potential to create knowledge attrition from the institution (Hatak, & Roessl, 2015). The goal of this study was to explore the impact that said knowledge attrition may have had on stakeholders within a career college; therefore, these were the factors that influenced the participant selection logic.

The participant pool for this case study included a group of 12 executives, administrators, and faculty members who experienced senior executive succession without knowledge transfer or succession planning. All of the participants had been part of the same group of three career colleges in Central New Jersey. The succession without knowledge transfer or succession planning occurred at various intervals during the period from July 2013 until August 2014.

This was an exploratory case study, and the participants who were likely to have the greatest amount of insight regarding succession without knowledge transfer or succession planning were the executives at the career colleges. During the time frame described above, there were seven individuals who held the post of either executive director or interim executive director at one of the three schools in the career college grouping. Of that group of seven, one of the individuals was me, and another individual was the senior leader who possessed both tacit and explicit knowledge of the organization and of the interactions among staff and executives. The remaining five executives were

the planned pool for the study. The names of these individuals were known to me due to my previous working relationships with these individuals. The tools I used for contacting these individuals and recruiting them to participate in the study included social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook, as well as email communication. I asked the participants if they were willing to respond to semistructured interview questions that reflected on their experiences during succession at ABC Career College. I offered a small token of appreciation, a \$10 Dunkin Donuts or Starbucks gift card, in compensation for their participation.

The administrators who worked with the executives who had experienced succession without knowledge transfer included a group of approximately 10 individuals. Their experiences and perceptions about the importance of knowledge transfer in the three locations of ABC Career College were important for building the case. I contacted these individuals through social media such as LinkedIn and Facebook as well as via email. Although there were about 10 potential participants, I expected the participation rate to be lower because this study was about participants' responses to how their managers' succession experiences without knowledge transfer or succession planning occurred. The lower limit for participation of the administrator group was three administrators. This was because the total number of available administrators within the entire pool was approximately six, so there was no possibility of getting many more than four.

The faculty members who worked with the executives who had experienced succession without knowledge transfer included a group of more than 30 individuals. They have varied perceptions and understanding of what happened during this transition

and the effect that they perceived the lack of knowledge transfer had on their work experience as well as on the students' educational experiences. The faculty member participation rate was relatively low because faculty reported to the administrators, who reported to the executives. The lower limit for participation of the faculty group was four faculty members. This was because the total number of available faculty within the entire pool was approximately 10. Many of those faculty members taught for multiple institutions and were completely unreachable at the time of data collection, so there was no possibility of getting many more than four participants.

When I encountered difficulties in identifying any one of the three types of participants required to complete the research, I employed snowball or referral strategy sampling to gain access to additional potential participants. In the snowball strategy for sampling, I asked the participants whom I was able to contact if they knew of any other individuals who also met the necessary criteria to participate in the study (Harvey, 2014). Because this sample was purposive in nature, and there was a specific, limited group of available participants, snowball sampling strategy was one that aligned best with contacting and interviewing any additional potential participants beyond those that responded to the initial request for participation (Morgan, 2008). The data collection period lasted for several months because of the employment of the snowball sampling strategy and the difficulties I encountered with identifying enough qualified participants. Although I, as the researcher, had some of the people who fit the required criteria for participation in the study in my contacts database, there were several other individuals who also fit the criteria for the study who did not appear in my available list of contacts. Because of the bounded nature of this exploratory case study, it was important for me to

identify potential sources of participants in advance of starting to collect data so that I did not encounter a lack of participants prior to reaching the minimum number of respondents to build a completed case. Identification of potential participants did not involve contacting those individuals. Instead, it involved reviewing organizational charts from the three schools that were in the specific OPEID that was the subject of this research. The use of an initial contact strategy for the identified population, followed by a snowball sampling strategy within the confines of the bounded case proved sufficient to meet the sampling requirements and provided enough data for analysis.

Instrumentation

The instrument for this project was a semistructured exit interview questionnaire with follow up, open-ended, interview questions [Appendix A]. Olivier Serrat of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Washington, DC developed this questionnaire; his emailed permission for me to use his tool is also in Appendix A. The instrument involved an interview protocol, which included an exit interview questionnaire that individuals within an institution might administer prior to conducting an exit interview as well as a set of semistructured interview questions that an employee might answer at the time of or following the exit of an institution. The ADB published this semistructured interview instrument as an exit interview protocol that any organization could use to maintain knowledge and mitigate knowledge attrition in organizations (Serrat, 2010). This tool was one of many that were used during the ADB's effort to create a knowledge culture and ensure that institutional knowledge remained within the organization despite employee attrition.

The semistructured interview questions specifically addressed what knowledge individuals, exiting an organization, would be willing to share with their successors. The interview questions also addressed the level of comfort that individuals felt with communication and performance expectations in their roles within the organization (Serrat, 2010). These two aspects of the instrument provided a direct connection to the research questions about how the absence of knowledge transfer affected an executive's perception of his or her ability to be successful in the role. Understanding communication and performance expectations is one of the key components of insuring employee stakeholder engagement within an institution (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014). Because Serrat designed this tool to evaluate how well knowledge does or does not transfer and how employees respond to the attrition of knowledge, no modifications to the tool were necessary.

Serrat made this tool available to any manager or leader who had an interest in capturing information from employees who exit an institution. Various clients of the ADB have used the tool to validate it since its creation. The instrument is included in a series of information and tools entitled a Compendium of Knowledge Solutions that the ADB produced. All the materials within the compendium are open access and do not require any individual or institution to request specific permission from Serrat or the ADB to use the tools. The contextual background for the development of this instrument was the value of knowledge within organizations and the risks that institutions face when knowledge attrition occurs (Serrat, 2010). The context and described outcomes of this semistructured exit interview instrument made it a good fit for evaluating the perceptions of knowledge stickiness and knowledge transfer within an institution.

There were several questions on the selected instrument that related directly to the overarching research question for the study. When collecting the data, I focused on listening for information that the participants said directly as well as attempting to pick up on non-verbal clues and cues given by the participants during the semistructured interview process. This instrument was highly applicable because it gave each respondent many opportunities to talk about knowledge management, knowledge transfer, and knowledge attrition in a broad context. These opportunities to address a wide spectrum of topics related to knowledge when entering a role came in the form of questions such as “What could you have done better or more?”; “What improvement could be made to the way you were inducted for your role(s)?”. Those questions and the responses that participants gave provided insight into how the respondents felt when starting in the role that they had at the career college. These might have been particularly important from this instrument for the executives who succeeded into new roles where the knowledge transfer was absent.

Beyond questions about the participants’ induction into the institution, there were questions that addressed training and development. This was interesting because some knowledge transfer could have occurred through new employee training or ongoing training within an institution (Orlova, Afonin, & Voronin, 2015). One question on the instrument: “What training and development would you have liked or needed that you did not receive and what effect would that have had?” was particularly illuminating.

This instrument connected very well to the overarching research question because it contains seven semistructured interview questions that focused explicitly on the topic of knowledge management. These questions concentrated on passing on knowledge to a

successor, sharing contacts with a successor, gathering and using knowledge with other employees, and a description of the most important knowledge assets within the institution. These questions were highly applicable to all the potential participants in the study and provided information regarding the value that the individuals within this bounded case placed on knowledge assets within the institution and their ability to gain access to those assets and utilize them for performance improvement. I was especially interested in responses to the question “How might your explicit and tacit knowledge be transferred prior to your departure?” because it called out the differences in the two types of knowledge and offered an opportunity to learn more about how the participants perceived the importance of both types of knowledge in their roles.

The instrument had some questions that related specifically to communication and working conditions. Because knowledge sharing and communities of practice can be an integral element in knowledge transfer, understanding how participants felt about communication and workplace conditions was an important factor in whether the potential for creation of communities of practice existed (Mittal & Dhar, 2014). One question: “How would you describe the culture of the unit?” offered some information about why knowledge sharing or communities of practice did or did not exist. Gaining insight into how the participants felt about the level of communication with the bounded case was an important clue about the potential for creating pathways over which knowledge had the potential to transfer.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The following is a description of the procedure for data collection. It includes location, timing, and individuals involved in data collection. It also includes which characteristics qualified an individual to be a participant in the data collection process.

I collected the data from executives, administrators, and faculty members who worked in a group of three career colleges within Central New Jersey. The boundaries for this exploratory case study came from the configuration of all three colleges belonging to a single unit in the same Office of Postsecondary Education Identification (OPEID) group (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). All schools within a specific OPEID, including the main and the branches, share equally in any evaluations of performance and outcomes of a given OPEID (Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges, 2015). Therefore, a single OPEID was the definition of a bounded case. The executives and administrators who worked within this OPEID from July 2013 until August 2014 were eligible participants in the semistructured interview process for this study.

Each potential participant received a letter, via email, requesting that they consider participating in this exploratory case study as an anonymous participant. The letter they received can be found in Appendix C. The letter contained information about how the collected data would remain encrypted and locked away from others until the anticipated date for destruction five years after data collection. The letter explained the purpose of the case study and the reasoning for why each recipient would be a good fit for the participant pool in the study. The letter also included the initial survey questionnaire that is on page one of Appendix A and asked each recipient, if they agreed to participate in the study, to complete the questionnaire and send it back to me via email.

The letter explained how the meeting between me and the potential participant would happen via internet audio conferencing and that a recording of the semistructured interview would result from the time that we spent together. The letter provided a consent form and an open calendar with several time slots for collecting the semistructured interview information. To avoid the potential for double booking, each recipient of the letter received an additional email containing specific days when they might be able to schedule a semistructured interview and had an option to choose up to three different time slots. The letter also explained that the interview was likely to take up to 90 minutes to complete and that all responses would remain entirely confidential. The letter included a description of how the participants would have an opportunity to review the information they provided and make any edits that they felt were necessary. After the letters went out, I sent follow up emails to gain responses as rapidly as possible. Upon collection of at least 14 responses with participants spanning the three categories of executive, administrator and faculty member, I stopped soliciting participants. The cessation of participant recruitment was due to the very small available number of potential participants and the extended period of time it took to collect responses from those 14. After collecting those responses there were 2 potential participants who did not complete the necessary follow up to conduct the interviews. Because the participants came from three former career colleges and the staff sizes at those colleges was not very large, there were not very many potential participants available to respond to the request for participation.

Each participant participated in a semistructured interview after he or she had a brief opportunity to understand the purpose of this study and their role in providing

information. Prior to the semistructured interview, each participant received a short questionnaire that contained demographic information as well as dates of working within the career colleges and information about knowledge transfer that applied to each person's role. The questionnaire appears in its entirety in Appendix A.

I conducted the semistructured interviews using the recorded audio conference software UberConference to make sure that I captured as much verbal communication nuance as possible from the participants. The participants received the questionnaire, which is a part of the interview protocol, in advance and were then asked all the recommended semistructured interview questions during the interview process. I was the person who collected the data from all the participants using UberConference. I scheduled the interviews with the participants using a four step process. Step 1: connected with the prospective participant via text, email, LinkedIn or Facebook; Step 2: provided a list of several dates and times convenient to the participant for conducting the interview; Step 3: scheduled a specific time with each participant to conduct the interview; Step 4: sent each participant the pre-interview questionnaire and requested that they return it to me at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled interview time. The timetable for conducting the interviews began within 10 days of receiving IRB approval. The data collection period took 4 months with each interview lasting anywhere from 25 to 60 minutes depending on the length of each participant's responses. Once I collected the recorded interviews, I used a combination of software tools and direct listening to transcribe them into document format.

While I had clearly identified the potential participant pool, there were some potential participants for whom contact information remained unavailable. It became

necessary for me to apply the snowball technique to those participants who did respond to my request for participation to expand the participant pool. After collecting all the data from participants, I provided a summary of the information collected from the interview to each participant. I also provided the transcripts of their semistructured interviews to them for review so that they had an opportunity to make an edits or adjustments that they felt were appropriate. There was no expectation that follow-up interviews would be a requirement beyond the allotment of time for participants to review their semistructured interview responses. None of the participants responded with any updates to their transcribed interview information.

Data Analysis Plan

The semistructured exit interview questions provided in Appendix A related to the transfer of knowledge and the potential for knowledge attrition during succession in any institution. This study rested on the research question of: How does the lack of knowledge transfer during executive leadership succession at a career college influence stakeholder engagement? How does the absence of knowledge transfer among career college executives impede succession in a career college? The data that came from the exit instrument included information about how well the individuals understood both tacit and explicit knowledge elements from their job as well as what knowledge was missing when each individual either started in the role or started working for a new person with a new set of expectations for specific performance metrics in that new role. Whether the participant was part of the executive group, the administrative group, or the faculty group, the interviewer asked all the semistructured exit interview questions that are listed

in Appendix A to get information on the role that knowledge transfer may have played in each individual's perceived effectiveness in their role at the career college.

I used two approaches to coding the semistructured interview responses. The first was *a priori* coding, which meant that I selected a group of codes that related to the research question as well as to the conceptual frameworks that underpin the research (Tobacco Control Evaluation Center, n.d.). Wiig (1993) discusses the processes involved in knowledge as well as the individuals who are a part of creating and transferring knowledge within institutions in his model for building and using knowledge. Szulanski (2003) describes the concept of knowledge stickiness as the knowledge attrition that occurs in institutions when knowledge gets stuck with specific individuals inside of an institution for a myriad of reasons. For the *a priori* coding, because this research is about perceptions of behaviors, strategies and activities surrounding knowledge building and knowledge transition, I used some of the typical broad categories for coding. Those categories include: specific acts, events, activities, strategies or tactics, relationships or interactions, and conditions or constraints (Gibbs, 2002). Some of these codes included main themes of knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer, and knowledge attrition including "community and/or communities of practice", "training", "development", "processes and procedures". These codes were the basis for how perceptions of the participants developed and what responses to the situation and to co-workers they had due to those perceptions.

The second approach was post coding, which had the advantage of developing codes based on what the data revealed to me as I conducted the semistructured interviews with all the participants (Singleton & Straits, 2010). The post coding for this project

applied to concepts that arose relating specifically to knowledge transfer, knowledge attrition, knowledge gaps, and the overarching concept of knowledge management. These codes were not only a part of the conceptual framework of this research project; they were also a part of the story that the research results told (Tobacco Control Evaluation Center, n.d.). Because this terminology may or may not have been familiar to the participants, it was my responsibility to interpret the interview responses and code them to those topics after reviewing and evaluating all the interview data.

The software for analysis of the collected interview information included UberConference, Dragonfly Naturally Speaking Version 12, Microsoft Word for Mac Version 15.26, NVivo for Mac Version 14 and Microsoft Excel for Mac Version 15.26. UberConference is a free, web-based application that allowed individuals in different locations to conduct an audio conference. There were no incidents with the audio stopping during the middle of any interviews, so there were no requirements to re-start or resume any interviews. The semistructured interviews were captured via UberConference resulting in a recording of each semistructured interview. Dragonfly Naturally Speaking is software that converted the spoken words from a recording. Dragonfly Naturally Speaking is a tool that processed the recorded interviews from UberConference and converted the recordings into transcripts in Rich Text Format, which I then converted into Microsoft Word software. Although, I believed that using Dragonfly Naturally speaking would reduce the need for manually typed transcription and was a commercial tool for capturing voice recordings, I found that the accuracy of the transcriptions was not sufficient for use in the NVivo software. In order to address that issue, I listened to the audio recordings while viewing the DragonFly Naturally speaking produced transcripts

and made corrections to the transcripts until they matched what I heard the participants say on their recordings. Microsoft Word transcripts were loaded into the NVivo software in the appropriate format for parsing, coding, and identification of patterns. I used the NVivo 14 for MAC software to organize coded information collected from the semistructured interviews. This software provided an analysis of any patterns that did or did not exist in the collected data. The NVivo package also included training and an introduction to the most productive methods for using the qualitative data coding software, which were an important element for understanding where unexpected connections existed within the data after the completion of data collection. Finally, Microsoft Excel is a tool that I used to further analyze the connections between the a priori coding and the post interview coding that came from the data.

Due to the exploratory nature of this single case study, there were participants whose responses were significantly different from those of other participants or from the expected responses to the interview questions. In situations where the respondent's information represented a significant outlier from the other participant data, and/or does not match the conceptual framework that underpins the study, I attempted to fully address, document, and explicate that outlier. In case study research, it is important to look not only for convergence of ideas but also for divergence of ideas (Patton, 2015). The presence of substantively discrepant or deviant responses to the interview tool indicated that I did not approach the research with zealotry as Patton warns against; but was thorough in attempting to truly understand and explore perspectives from individuals who experienced the situation described in the bounded case.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility for this research came through several channels. In addition to the individually completed questionnaires that preceded the semistructured interviews with the participants, there was also the presence of previously collected questionnaires from students who expressed opinions about their experiences. The use of this type of data provided an archival background that added to the depth and richness of information available about the case study (Foster, Hays & Alter, 2013). These surveys provided triangulation on how well the executives, administrators and faculty members responded to the executive succession without knowledge transfer in the opinions of the students who were present when the executive succession without knowledge transfer occurred.

In addition to triangulation, this study included the opportunity for participants to review the transcribed responses to their interview sessions. Allowing members of the participant group to check their responses against what they remembered or perceived lent credibility to the information collected through the interview phase of the research. I also augmented member checking through my reflexivity and previously held, prolonged contact with some portion of the participant group. Despite a break of more than 18 months in regular contact with some and longer than that time with others, there was little need to negotiate a relationship with the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Because I was a part of the OPEID and previously worked either directly or indirectly with the proposed participants of the study, I did have a reflexive view of the information that I collected through this process. The contextual and reflexive knowledge of the

situation that I had provided augmentation for the credibility of the data analysis and its interpretation.

Transferability

This exploratory case study, which contained significant depth and detail in response to the semistructured interview questions, used thick description as a method of providing external validity for the research outcomes. The open-ended nature of the questions about each participant's experience with knowledge management and job performance opened the door to several details regarding knowledge transfer or knowledge attrition. The exit interview tool that was the basis of collecting data for this research project offered the participants a wide opportunity to discuss the impressions of their experiences including successful outcomes as well as disappointments. As a researcher who has had experience in the succession process lacking knowledge transfer as well as in the succession process containing knowledge transfer, my goal was to allow the participants to express themselves as fully as possible providing contextual details of their experiences during the succession process (Patton, 2015). The principle of proximal similarity was one that applied most effectively to transferability for this research. Exploring knowledge transfer in this set of three career colleges may have given transferable information for other similar career colleges. Because these career colleges were part of a smaller business with revenues less than \$5 million per year, the information gleaned from this study may be applicable to other institutions or organizations of similar size and annual revenue amounts.

Dependability

Insuring dependability of the data collected was an important aspect of the researcher's task. To provide information on how dependable the information was, there was an audit trail that described the collection of all the data inputs including date, location, method of data collection, recording tools, participant's role in the career college, participant's tenure at the career college, demography of each participant and the steps that the researcher followed to collect the information from each participant. In addition to this audit trail information about data collection, there was also be a step-by-step description of the data analysis including the tools used and how conclusions evolved through an evaluation and analysis of the collected data. To further support dependability, I reviewed archived information from some of the students who were attending the colleges during the time of the succession without knowledge transfer. The questionnaires collected from students who were present during the executive succession without knowledge transfer included responses related to various departments within the administration as well as faculty members. The questionnaire that provided additional information from the students who were involved is included in Appendix B. The data from this questionnaire was entirely anonymous and lacked specific ties to any of the questionnaire respondents. This review was an effort to triangulate findings regarding how well the executives, administrators and faculty members performed in their roles following an executive succession without a planned knowledge transfer, which led to knowledge attrition within the career colleges.

Confirmability

Reflexivity as a member of the career college community was an important element of this research. Patton (2015) describes reflexivity as a combination of understanding who I was as a researcher, who the participants were within the setting, how the participants could understand and thoroughly participate in the information that I gave them so that I could effectively analyze and utilize the information that they gave me. In this research project, I had enough experience with knowledge transfer and attrition inside the career college setting to develop an informed perspective on how and why the knowledge in question could have had importance to the performance of the institution. I also possessed some information on the performance outcomes that occurred following the executive succession without knowledge transfer as a means of understanding the context and perspective around the importance or potential lack thereof related to knowledge transition.

Ethical Procedures

Institutional permissions were not necessary for this study because the participants were from a group of individuals who formerly worked for a career college that was defunct when the research project began. The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process guided the ethical procedures for this research. I followed all requirements of the IRB approval process prior to initiating any contact with potential research subjects. There were no vulnerable groups within the sample that fitted into a group of participants reasonably prepared to respond to the research questions. The sampling technique that I used to identify participants included a larger pool than what was necessary to reach saturation, thus when some of the potential participants elected

not to contribute to the research or others chose to exit the research after it had begun, there was still a sufficient sample to collect interview data from several different perspectives. When a dearth of participants became an issue, the snowball sampling strategy was applied to increase the number of available participants for this study. There were appropriate consent forms presented to and collected from each participant in the study. The consent forms contained an explanation of the types of information that came from the study so that any potential participant had an opportunity to understand, clearly, the impact that his or her participation might have had on the research results. All study participants also received the necessary disclaimers regarding their participation in the study.

Any working relationship that may have existed between the researcher and the participants would have ended in April of 2015. I collected the data during the period of April through August of 2017, so there was no opportunity for ethical concerns regarding work relationships or supervisory roles to be a part of the data collection steps. There was also no possibility of a power differential, as the participants did not live or work in the state of Maryland, where I was employed during data collection. This means that for the time span of the research conducted and through to the end of its publication, I do not have any opportunity to exercise power over the potential participants in the research.

All data collected from the participants remains confidential and in the sole possession of the researcher, in a locked and/or secure space. I am the only person with access to the data and once the research was completed and all findings and conclusions have been submitted for approval, I will destroy the data to protect any confidential information.

Summary

Use of the case-study method can be somewhat controversial because of the lack of scientific background for the development of a qualitative case study. Some researchers believe that a case study methodology is not generalizable and should only be the first step in developing a hypothesis that can provide further avenues of study (Flyberrg, 2006). While case study can be a means of developing hypotheses, it can also be a tool to develop understanding and knowledge without providing support for other hypotheses. Some may also perceive that case studies are less valuable than other quantitative methods because it can be very difficult to determine whether the findings are generalizable to a wider population than the initial members of the case (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Even if there are some obstacles to generalizing the data that comes from case study research, the depth and detail of the information provided by those who participate in the case gives much more information than what might occur through survey data collection (Monette, Sullivan & Dejon, 2011). The purposive nature of selecting a case to assist with understanding a specific theory or conceptual framework can be both helpful and difficult for the researcher. The difficulty arises from the interconnectedness of the case and the researcher's experience. The depth of experience that the researcher has can provide additional insights into the background of the case and enrich the findings that the case study provides (Farquhar, 2012). The exploratory nature of the problem and the availability of a specific, bounded case to understand more about knowledge transfer and knowledge attrition demonstrated the strength of the case study method for this research project.

The foundation for this study came from the conceptual frameworks of Wiig's model for building and using knowledge as well as Szulanski's concept of knowledge stickiness. This framework is focusing on the question of how knowledge attrition during executive succession influences stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder engagement evaluation came through conducting exit interviews with individuals who experienced executive succession without knowledge transfer.

The exit interview instrument, developed by Olivier Serrat at the Asian Development Bank, was the primary tool that I used to collect perspectives and information on how knowledge transfer and/or knowledge attrition occurred in executive succession at a group of three career colleges in Central New Jersey. This exploratory case study had a foundation of semistructured interviews using Serrat's instrument from a population of executives, administrators and faculty members who worked within a single OPEID encompassing three career colleges from July of 2013 until April of 2014. I coded and analyzed the data collected from the interviews using NVivo software and drew any conclusions regarding the perspectives of the participants on knowledge transition or knowledge attrition by triangulating the interview responses with qualitative information from a previously collected survey tool given to students who were also present during the executive succession without knowledge transfer.

The results of the data collection methodology described to this point have a detailed explanation in chapter 4. Beyond the explanation of the methodology, I have provided several examples of the interview responses from the tool that Olivier Serrat created, including how the various participants had either similar or dissimilar responses. In chapter 5, I draw conclusions about what those collected responses mean. I have also

included information about how students who were present during iterative executive transition responded to student satisfaction surveys before and after they actually experienced a change in the leadership at the school they had been attending. Finally, I make recommendations based on the collected data and my interpretation of what the data elements, collectively, indicate for practice and future research.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to understand how the absence of knowledge transfer and succession planning can impact stakeholder engagement when a change in executive leadership occurs at a career college. To assess the level of stakeholder engagement, I conducted semistructured interviews with executives, administrators, and faculty members.

This chapter provides the framework for how I collected the data in my study. The following sections address the research setting, the demography of the research participants, and the research process for this project. Additionally, this chapter describes the data analysis process that I applied and the initial results of that process. Finally, there is a synthesis of the results from the data analysis leading to answers for my initial research questions.

Pilot Study

The potential sample for this study was so small that there were not enough potential participants for a pilot study. Additionally, the data collection tool that I used was one that had been published previously and repeatedly applied by various employers who wanted to collect exit interview data on their employees. The questions that were in the exit interview protocol had a direct connection to the concepts of knowledge transfer and stakeholder engagement and included topics such as communication, training, and onboarding for various roles within a firm. The exit interview protocol was made available through publication; however, I did contact the original author and requested specific permission to use the exit interview tool. The original author's email response is on the third page of Appendix A.

Research Setting

The participants in this study all worked within a single identification number assigned by the Office of Postsecondary Education Identification (OPEID) of ABC Career College from 2013 through 2014. This OPEID covered three career school locations in Parsippany, Jersey City, and North Brunswick, New Jersey. The individuals who participated in this study worked at one of those three locations during the time frame covered by this study. Some of those individuals are still working in those cities now; however, the three career colleges that were part of the one OPEID are no longer owned by ABC Career College. I selected this setting because of the iterative turnover that occurred in career colleges owned by ABC Career College during the time covered by the study.

Iterative turnover in the role of the campus director could have had an effect on how well the individuals working in each of these campuses were able to perform the tasks in their job descriptions. The students who were studying at these career colleges may have also experienced the impact of having the senior leader at a career college leave the college unexpectedly. Among the three campuses listed in this OPEID during the year-long period that was discussed as a part of the interview process, there were six campus leaders. The rapidity with which the campus leaders changed in the three schools of this OPEID was the reason that these locations were a good source of participants for this study.

Because the administrators and the faculty members who worked at the three career college campus locations within this OPEID experienced iterative executive change within a 12-month period, they had experiences related to the impact that these

changes could have on employees. This study was about understanding how that impact may or may not have related to the absence of knowledge transfer when there was executive leadership turnover. Members of the executive leadership population as well as of the administrative population and the faculty population at each of the school locations were in the participant group, whether or not they were still working in the same locations where the previous ABC Career College schools had existed.

Demographics

There were 12 participants in this study, all of whom had worked at one of the locations in the OPEID that was the subject of this study. Four of them had been executive directors in one of the career colleges, four of them had been administrators reporting to the executive directors, and four of them had been faculty members who worked directly with the students in the career college classrooms. All of the participants were at least 25 years of age at the time that they worked in the career college, and none of the participants were in any way vulnerable as a result of participating in the study. All of them were able to provide their perspectives and insights on the changes that occurred within each career college for the time period that was the subject of this exploratory case study.

Table 1 provides demographic information on the 12 participants, all of whom were present at one of the three schools where iterative executive turnover occurred.

Table 1

Description of Participants From the OPEID

<u>Participant number</u>	<u>Gender and age</u>	<u>Job title</u>
Participant 1	Male, 25+	Executive director
Participant 2	Male, 25+	Administrator
Participant 3	Male, 25+	Executive director
Participant 4	Female, 25+	Administrator
Participant 5	Male, 25+	Executive director
Participant 6	Male, 25+	Executive director
Participant 7	Female, 25+	Administrator
Participant 8	Male, 25+	Faculty
Participant 9	Female, 25+	Administrator
Participant 10	Male, 25+	Faculty
Participant 11	Female, 25+	Faculty
Participant 12	Male, 25+	Faculty

Data Collection

Interviews with individuals who worked in the three different capacities within the OPEID were the data source for this exploratory case study. To ensure that the perspectives came from a balanced group of participants, I attempted to have an even distribution of each type of participant. I reached out to four participants from the executive director group and was able to secure participation from all of them. I connected with eight potential interviewees from the administrator population and was

able to get four of them to participate. I contacted 11 faculty members and was able to get responses from four participants in that population.

I had to employ the snowball referral strategy to get enough participants in each of the three participant groups. Because of the use of the snowball referral technique, the identification of participants for each group required several months of repeated invitation and contact to finalize the participants. There were some significant time gaps in interview activity while I attempted to identify and vet a sufficient amount of participants to represent each group that needed to be included in the participants for the study.

I conducted the interviews using the semistructured interview protocol. Data collection began in April 2017 and continued through August 2017. The extended data collection period was necessary because of difficulty in identifying a sufficient number of participants for the study. Table 2 contains a description of the time and duration for the interviews that I conducted.

I collected all interview recordings by using the UberConference software, which allowed the participants to communicate either via telephone or via an Internet connection. The UberConference software had an option for recording each interview and maintaining the recording in an account that was password protected. I informed each participant when I turned on the recording and when I turned off the recording. Additionally, the UberConference software made an announcement indicating when recording started and ended.

Table 2

Interview Protocol for Participants From the OPEID

	Date	Time	Place	Duration
Participant 1	4/23/17	1:30 pm	UberConference	56 minutes
Participant 2	4/23/17	7:50 pm	UberConference	65 minutes
Participant 3	4/26/17	8:00 pm	UberConference	64 minutes
Participant 4	4/27/17	8:00 pm	UberConference	31 minutes
Participant 5	4/27/17	9:00 pm	UberConference	74 minutes
Participant 6	6/12/17	9:30 pm	UberConference	40 minutes
Participant 7	6/21/17	3:50 pm	UberConference	35 minutes
Participant 8	7/10/17	8:00 pm	UberConference	36 minutes
Participant 9	7/22/17	3:00 pm	UberConference	30 minutes
Participant 10	7/25/17	8:30 pm	UberConference	31 minutes
Participant 11	8/11/17	11:10 am	UberConference	34 minutes
Participant 12	8/23/17	5:00 pm	UberConference	49 minutes

Once the recordings were collected, I used DragonFly Naturally Speaking software to transcribe the recordings. Because of the diversity in speech patterns among the participants in the study, the initial transcription that was produced by the DragonFly Naturally Speaking software for each participant had several portions that were not clearly decipherable. As a means of addressing that issue, I did a secondary verbatim transcription of each interview. All of the completed transcriptions are maintained on a computer that is password protected with my personal password. Because the interview protocol contained a specific set of questions, there were not any unusual circumstances

in the interviews. I posed my questions in an entirely objective manner based on the questions listed on the interview protocol. Due to the semistructured nature of the interview protocol, some participants did ask for clarification of some questions. On occasion, I asked some of the participants for additional detail or further clarification in their responses. In sum, the data collection matched the exact description of data collection in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

I used the four terms that I had identified as a priori coding nodes for my initial analytic pass through all 12 collected interviews. In the NVivo software, I identified any information that fit into one of the four initial nodes that reflected knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing, such as community and/or communities of practice, development, policies, and training. Table 3 contains examples of statements from the collected interviews that I marked as belonging to one of the a priori nodes. Because the interview questions included some complex topics that may have required detailed information in the responses, some of the selected quotations are extensive.

Table 3

Initial Coding Report

A priori nodes	Quotes that applied to a priori nodes
Community of practice	you know we had meetings on a weekly basis and during those meetings we were able to go over different things that were going on inside the unit and discuss we had a lot of different kinds of discussions nevertheless ... I don't think it's difficult but it should be done companywide wherein we had at least a monthly meeting where everyone was involved and we discussed things that were going on in each individual unit during that discussion maybe another unit may have went through the same thing and they could give advice and so on and so forth
Development	I don't know that there was a really strong plan for my development I think it's a challenge in our positions at the level that we come in sometimes with is that there's a high expectation that we bring a certain amount of knowledge that we can apply in the absence of strong and frequent direction
Policies	but again learning company policies and procedures is always the tricky part, how do I get this how do I order paper how do I hire somebody all those things when you have a great regional VP that can help to weed through the process it helps tremendously and he was fortunate that he did
Training	there really was no structured training so I can't say that it was assessed by anyone when it was just here you go and I had to rely on my staff to get me through how to get through the database and so forth so there was no structured or formal training so it's difficult to say how was how it was assessed by anyone because it really didn't exist

The a priori nodes were easily identifiable. The concept of community of practice was not one that was widely used within this group of participants. To identify that specific node, I used a description of a situation that equates to a community of practice rather than searching for those specific words. Aside from identifying word choices that would typically describe a community of practice, I did not need to identify word choices or speech patterns that matched the a priori nodes that I had identified. This may have

been connected to the language in the exit interview protocol. It could also have been an artifact of how the participants in the study viewed their experiences in the career college as they produced their responses to the exit interview questions.

While reviewing all of the transcripts to identify the a priori coding instances that occurred, I also made notes regarding other themes that recurred in the responses of the participants. There were two types of themes that recurred. The first type consisted of subsets of the a priori coding nodes. The subset for community and/or communities of practice included collaboration and best practice. The subset for development included knowledge transition and mentoring. The subset for policies included processes and procedures. The subset for training included onboarding and shadowing. I identified each of these subsets as a means of labeling additional commentary from the participants that supported the a priori coding without always labeling the specific wording that I used to name the initial a priori node.

Once I had completed all of the identification for the a priori nodes, I looked at other themes that were recurring throughout the interview transcripts. These themes appeared to connect to the overarching research question of how lack of knowledge transfer during executive leadership succession at a career college influenced stakeholder engagement, where stakeholders were the executives, administrators, and faculty. These additional themes included communication, corporate, engagement, and institutional knowledge. Within each of these additional themes, there were recurring subsets as well. As with the a priori nodes, the additional theme nodes had subsets that I identified as a method of grouping ideas together that are related within the context of this study but might not have been connected in typical conversation outside of this study.

The additional theme of communication had culture, documentation, feedback, and transparency as the subset of ideas that all contributed to communication within the setting of the career colleges in this study. The subset concepts within this theme developed from many of the participants' quotes that referred to the presence or absence of communication within the career college setting based upon a culture of sharing or the availability of documentation. There was also a concern about the availability or lack of transparency and feedback, both within each individual career college unit as well as between the career college units and other related units such as the corporate office.

The additional theme of corporate contained the concepts of company, numbers, operations, performance, senior management, and turnover. Within the context of this study, there was a concerted emphasis from the external corporate headquarters focused specifically on campus performance. The corporate senior managers were consistently pressing for improved operational performance as demonstrated by numeric performance outcomes from each of the career college locations within the OPEID.

The additional theme of engagement also included the concepts of motivation and reward. The participants connected these ideas because they made references to being either motivated or demotivated from several sources. The participants also made reference to the types of rewards they either received or would have liked to receive from the career college as an employer. Engagement and motivation as well as rewards also came from interaction with the student population in the career schools, so both perspectives on this theme were part of this node.

The additional theme of institutional knowledge had only one subset node. This theme was mentioned specifically by some individuals who seemed to have more

familiarity with the concept of knowledge transfer prior to participating in the study. Some of the participants specifically and spontaneously mentioned the value of conducting exit interviews, which can be an essential ingredient in the effort to collect and maintain institutional knowledge.

Table 4 contains all nodes, both a priori and post data collection, that were a part of identifying themes in the participant responses to the semistructured interview questions. I identified these nodes after reviewing each of the interview transcripts at least one time for a priori coding and then at least one time for additional themes. Some of the interview transcripts had such thick, descriptive information, with a depth of detail that I reviewed the transcript a third time to ensure that I had properly identified all of the coding.

The coding report in Table 4 was the guide for how I identified and evaluated all of the data from the semistructured interviews. There were some instances where the data seemed to be a match for more than one of the nodes or subset nodes, in those situations, I marked the quotation from the interview with each node that seemed to match and then did a final evaluation for which node was the most appropriate match.

Table 4

Final Coding Report

Identification mode	Node	Subset
A priori	Community of practice	Best practice Collaboration
	Development	Knowledge transition Mentoring
	Policies	Procedures Processes
	Training	Onboarding Shadowing
Postcollection	Communication	Culture Documentation Feedback Transparency
	Corporate	Company Numbers Operations Performance Senior management Turnover
	Engagement	Motivation Reward
	Institutional knowledge	Exit interview

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

There were several tools to demonstrate credibility of the information collected during this research project. The participants completed preliminary questionnaires prior to responding to the semistructured interview protocol. These questionnaires provided background information on the participants. There were also questionnaires collected from the students, who were stakeholders, during the time of the iterative executive turnover. These questionnaires provided an idea of student opinions before executive turnover and then their opinions after executive turnover. These pieces of information were a source of background to enhance the understanding and context of the collected data for this case study, which provided an opportunity to align the realities that I perceived in this situation with the realities that the participants perceived (Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008). Reviewing the surveys allowed me to see if there was any change in the percentage of students who were satisfied with their experiences with the leadership, administration and faculty at the career college. Because these surveys are from before a change in leadership and then after a change in leadership without knowledge transfer, they can support the information collected from the executives, administrators and faculty members.

Participants also had an opportunity to review their transcribed interviews. They had an opportunity to send me a response if they had any difference of opinion about what their interview said from the transcription that they received. None of the participants sent back any corrections or updates to their transcribed interviews. Sending transcripts to those who participated in the study for them to review gave them an

opportunity to share any concerns about interpretations of what they shared during the interview protocol.

My reflexivity in connection with the transitions that occurred during the time frame of the study allowed me to evaluate the information provided by the participants using prior experience. I had worked with the participants in this group during the study period from 2013 through 2014 and could ask questions regarding their responses in the semistructured interview format to ensure that the responses aligned with the events about which the participants shared their impressions. The context and recollection of events allowed me to augment the credibility of the participant responses to the interview questions.

Transferability

Transferability for the data collected in this case study came from two sources. A practical application of any lessons derived through this study is a potential area of transferability to other institutions and businesses (Gebauer, Haldimann, & Saul, 2017). The open ended questions that were in the interview protocol allowed participants to share their experiences and to relate those experiences to other work settings aside from the three career colleges in the OPEID. The responses that the participants provided addressed topics that related to knowledge management and knowledge transfer in virtually any work setting. There were some participants who referred to career exposure in the higher education sector including universities and career colleges. In those responses, there was an indication that some participants were comparing experiences with executive succession inside this exploratory case study with other experiences at other workplaces. The participants' ability to speak at length in response to the open

ended, semistructured interview questions also created an opportunity for them to share experiences that could have been transferred both inside and outside of the career college industry. Transferability was definitely an element of some of the coding nodes, such as communication and corporate, which emerged after reviewing the collected data for common themes. The concepts that the participants shared in their responses, with varying levels of detail, indicated that there may have been transferability into this case study from their earlier experiences as well as transferability out of this case study because of what the participants learned during their work within the OPEID. The transferability of this information, while certainly applicable within the career college industry, is also potentially applicable to other organizations or institutions with the same workforce size and/or a similar amount of annual revenue.

Dependability

There was a clear audit trail on the data for this research including participant communication, how the collection activity occurred, when the participants provided the data, and the tools that I used to clean the data and then to analyze the data. Audit trails provide a method for increasing dependability and trustworthiness of qualitative data findings (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). There was also clarity around the demography of the participants and how each participant fit into the structure of the organization that formed the exploratory case.

In addition to the audit trail for data collection, the data analysis steps have been clearly outlined with the first pass of the data analysis to find the a priori coding nodes. There was a second pass to identify the additional themes that emerged after reviewing the a priori coding nodes. In some cases, there was a third pass of the data providing

additional clarity on where information related to the themes from the second pass might have emerged. In all situations related to the data, the concepts that reflected knowledge transfer or its absence tied to the responses from the participants.

The information from the surveys previously collected by students who were present during the time of this case was an additional element of dependability for this information. The student surveys had additional information on whether there was a change in student satisfaction in response to executive succession within the career colleges in the OPEID.

Confirmability

The primary element of confirmability that I used for this study was the concept of reflexivity in qualitative research. My experience as a senior leader who was responsible for the outcomes of the career colleges within this OPEID provided me with two significant components of reflexivity. These components included the researcher-researched relationship and the researcher's world view (Berger, 2015). Having worked in the career college industry and more specifically with and within the colleges included in this study, I had professional experience that connected to the events that occurred when the executive leaders were changing without knowledge transfer in this setting. An additional element of reflexivity was this similarity of responses from the participants in the study. In response to some questions related to specific topics many participants from each of the three groups provided responses that appeared to align very closely. Those closely aligned responses related to some of the main themes of the research, which included how well the career colleges within the OPEID were able to perform and what obstacles and supports were in place that might have affected their performance.

Ethical Procedures

Institutional permissions were not necessary for this study because the participants were from a group of individuals who formerly worked for a career college that was defunct at the time of data collection. The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process guided the ethical procedures for this research; the IRB approval for this research is #04-17-17-0103278. I followed all requirements of the IRB approval process prior to initiating any contact with potential research subjects. There were no vulnerable groups within the sample that fit the research questions.

The sampling technique that I used to identify participants included a larger pool than what was necessary to reach saturation, thus when some of the potential participants elected not to contribute to the research or others chose to exit the research after it had begun, there was still a sufficient sample to collect interview data from several different perspectives. When a dearth of participants became an issue, the snowball sampling strategy was applied to increase the number of available participants for this study. There were appropriate consent forms presented to and collected from each participant in the study. The consent forms contained an explanation of the types of information that came from the study so that any potential participant had an opportunity to understand, clearly, the impact that his or her participation might have had on this research project. All study participants also received the necessary disclaimers regarding their participation in the study.

Any working relationship that may have existed between the researcher and the participants would have ended in April of 2015. I collected the data from April to August of 2017, so there was no opportunity for ethical concerns regarding work relationships or

supervisory roles to be a part of the data collection steps. There was also no possibility of a power differential, as the participants did not live or work in the state of Maryland, where I was employed during data collection. For the time span of the research conducted and through to the end of its publication, I did not have any opportunity to exercise power over the potential participants in the research.

All data collected from the participants remains confidential and in my sole possession, in a locked and/or secure space. I have been and remain the only person with access to the data and now that the research is completed and I have submitted all findings and conclusions for approval, I will destroy the data to protect any confidential information.

Study Results

My goal with this study was to answer the following questions: How does the lack of knowledge transfer during executive leadership succession at a career college influence stakeholder engagement? How does the absence of knowledge transfer among career college executives impede succession in a career college? I employed two sets of coding themes in NVivo to answer those questions. The first set of themes was a priori and I determined those nodes before I began collecting data. I selected these themes based on their likely connection to the information that I anticipated could come from the data collection tool that I selected. The second set of themes emerged as recurring ideas throughout several of the semistructured interviews with the study participants. The following is a description of the how both the a priori and the emergent themes relate to the concepts within the study as well as how frequently both types of themes occurred throughout the data collection. After the descriptions and frequencies of both themes are

completed, an explanation of how the themes provide a response to the research questions follows.

A Priori Themes

As previously noted, there were four a priori coding nodes with node subsets: community of practice {best practice | collaboration}, development {knowledge transition | mentoring}, policies {procedures | processes}, training {shadowing | onboarding}. These coding nodes were connected to the concepts of knowledge transfer within organizations. The subsets were identified during data collection when the semistructured interview responses provided concepts that seemed to be supportive of the nodes that I had identified before data collection started.

Table 5 below is a tabulation of how commonly the 12 study participants referred to the first node: community of practice. While participants may not have used the specific phrase ‘community of practice’ there were several descriptions of situations that represented a community of practice within the career colleges where the participants were actively engaged. A community of practice provides an opportunity for its members to interact regularly and share information or knowledge as a means of either learning new items or creating new elements of knowledge (Kaminska & Borzillo, 2016). If any participant mentioned having an opportunity to gather in a defined setting or manner and share or expand knowledge about how they approached their work within the career college, I identified those comments as discussion of a community of practice. The mention of community of practice occurred in 83.3% of the discussions resulting from the semistructured interview protocol. The two subset nodes of community of practice included best practice, which was only included in responses from 8.3% of the

participants and collaboration, which appeared in responses from 41.7% of the participants. These occurrence rates of the node and subsets related to community of practice indicate that the participants had several instances of sharing at least one idea related to a community of practice when discussing their experiences within the OPEID but did not share as much specifically connected to best practices and collaboration in particular. This table indicates that the participants in the study would have appreciated the presence of a community of practice during the time of executive leadership transition without knowledge transfer.

Table 5

A Priori Theme 1

	Sources	Percentage	References
Community of practice	10	83.3%	27
Best practice	1	8.3%	1
Collaboration	5	41.7%	8
Total			36

Development, as it relates to career preparation and advancement, was another theme that I had identified in advance of conducting the interviews for this case study. Finding a method or a path for assisting employees to become stronger and more proficient in their roles is the idea behind the concept of development within this case study. Employee development that could potentially have an impact on employee performance involved the provision of opportunities and experiences that allowed employees to learn in a manner that would have helped them to become more proficient

and have greater expertise in their work role (Shuck, Twyford, Reio, & Shuck, 2014).

Table 6 below reflects responses about development and mentoring to the semistructured interview questions. According to the number of references to development as well as the percentage of participants who discussed development, this concept was discussed by 91.7% of the 12 respondents to the semistructured interview protocol. One subset of this concept, knowledge transition, was a topic in the interview for 66.7% of the participants indicating that its presence or absence had an impact on how the participants responded to the executive transitions that they experienced. Mentoring, which is often a way to improve employee performance within an organization and employee connection to an organization, was only a topic in the interview for 33% of the participants (“Mentoring as a source of organizational advantage”, 2013). This percentage indicated that while the participants were interested in getting more development, many of them did not turn to mentoring as a means of achieving that development, perhaps because the iterative change in leadership created a barrier to establishing mentoring relationships with executive leaders on each campus. Employees who desired to work on their development opportunities through mentoring, and who saw the iterative executive transition, may have thought that a mentoring relationship would not provide enough longevity to make it worth their time and effort (Baugh & Sullivan, 2005).

Table 6

A Priori Theme 2

	Sources	Percentage	References
Development	11	91.7%	26
Mentoring	4	33.3%	4
Knowledge transition	8	66.7%	16
Total			46

Understanding policies within an organization can be one way to address the difficulty that arises from iterative executive turnover because stakeholders can follow policies and have less concern about the individual who occupies the executive leadership role (Grissom, 2012). While established policies could be a way to increase stability within an organization through transition, this a priori node and its subset nodes had only 21 references through all of the semistructured interviews (Benson, 2006). In Table 7 below, the results from a priori nodes addressing policies are present. Discussions that relate to policies appeared in 66.7% of the participants' interview responses, which points to an interest in making sure that policies are available and understandable for those employees who experience the effects of iterative executive turnover. The two subset themes from the policies node are procedures and processes. The procedures subset node was only present in one participant's semistructured interview response, while the processes subset node arose in only two participants' semistructured interview responses. The absence of discussion about the subset nodes of procedures and processes for the

policies theme points to a focus on having clearly established policies, while maintaining a willingness to accept fluidity in procedures and processes.

Table 7

A Priori Theme 3

	Sources	Percentage	References
Policies	8	66.7%	18
Procedures	1	8.3%	1
Processes	2	16.7%	2
Total			21

The a priori node of training and its subset nodes of shadowing and onboarding were present with greater frequency than any of the other a priori nodes. The total number of references in the semistructured interviews for training and its subset concepts was 62, 20 more references than the next most referenced a priori nodes. Table 8 below shows the frequency of references to the training node as well as to its subset nodes of shadowing and onboarding.

Training is sometimes a tool that organizations and managers use in order to reduce turnover (Landeta, Barrutia, & Hoyos, 2009). Organizations that have higher turnover occasionally elect to reduce training and its related expenses because it becomes costly to continue training employees and managers who may leave before the institution can recoup the training dollars spent (Cascio, 2006). There was a 100% rate of discussing training among participants in this case study. This frequency of discussion during the semistructured interviews would indicate that the need for training on a consistent and

continuous basis was not addressed as well as the participants would have liked. The responses to the interview questions regarding preparedness to fulfill their job duties contained either a reference to the absence of training for the respondents and/or their co-workers or a reference to initial training that was somewhat effective, but a distinct lack of follow up or ongoing training opportunities.

Because training is a one of the direct methods to transfer or transition knowledge from some employees to others, the unmet demand for training that the case study participants expressed showed that knowledge transfer efforts were missing. The comments that the participants made referred to the need for additional training, more in-depth training, more topic specific training or more face-to-face training. While training did occur for some of the participants when they entered the role, only three of the participants reported having an extensive initial training experience. The remaining participants reported that there were some elements of training that occurred in either a partial or disjointed manner and that they would have preferred an environment that allowed new employees to shadow employees currently working in a role before entering that role and taking on the responsibilities of that role. Shadowing is different from mentoring where the senior employee gives advice and direction to the junior employee; in a shadowing situation, the employees are on the same level and sharing information equally (Roan & Rooney, 2006). Some of the participants mentioned that a shadowing period of one to two weeks before beginning a role in earnest would be helpful for all employees including themselves. Participants also mentioned that when they were considering leaving their roles, they would have welcomed an opportunity to allow their successors to shadow them. These participants also mentioned that within this case,

because of the rapidity of turnover, there might not have been an opportunity for shadowing to happen.

Shadowing might also have been an avenue for some of the employees within these schools to prepare for promotion into an advanced role. Some of the participants mentioned that with the rate of turnover that occurred during the time frame of the case, the opportunity for them to job shadow and advance into roles that others vacated might have reduced the loss of knowledge that resulted from the iterative turnover. One tool for easing the difficulties that result when there is significant management turnover is to create consistent opportunities for employees to shadow leaders or managers, which allows them to receive and potentially apply transferred knowledge.

Onboarding is another option that half of the participants mentioned as a means of insuring that they had the appropriate knowledge and preparation to perform at or above the expectations of the career college's management team. Onboarding is typically an opportunity for new employees to become acquainted with and understand the cultural and political norms within an organization; this acquaintance generally leads to new employees developing an identity that links them to their new employer (Cable, Gino, & Staats, 2013). The respondents indicated a thorough onboarding for themselves and for any of their co-workers would have been helpful for maintaining the knowledge within the organization. Half of those who participated in the study discussed the importance of onboarding and the practices that were in place to help employees within the OPEID to become familiar with the organization, its norms and expectations of employees. Because some of the knowledge that organizations collect is important for new employees to grasp, stickiness of cultural knowledge creates an onboarding experience that is neither

complete nor fully functioning for new employees. When there is iterative turnover, a lack of complete onboarding information can increase the risk that new and existing employees do not have all of the knowledge elements that they need to perform their roles well.

Table 8

A Priori Theme 4

	Sources	Percentage	References
Training	12	100%	42
Shadowing	4	33.3%	8
Onboarding	6	50.0%	12
Total			62

Emergent Themes

Following the identification of the a priori themes in the collected data, I reviewed all of the semistructured interview transcripts to scan for recurring ideas that appeared to develop into a theme occurring with some frequency throughout the participants' responses. Similar to the way that I identified the a priori themes and then found subsets for those themes based on related concepts, I reviewed the larger emergent themes that had become nodes and then found related concepts that supported those ideas. There were four recurring ideas that became emergent when I conducted the interviews and reviewed them to determine if any consistency of ideas was present. Those four recurring ideas were: communication; corporate; engagement and institutional knowledge.

The emergent theme of communication was the most commonly mentioned concept in all of the responses. Each participant who addressed the theme of communication or any of its subsets made several references to this theme throughout their responses to the semistructured interview questions, which is the reason why the communication node, including all of its subsets, had a higher number of references than any of the other themes. Table 9 below shows the tabulation of participants and references to this theme. While only 58.3% of all of the participants discussed communication specifically, one of the subset themes, feedback, had 75.0% of the participants mentioning it. This is an indication that there was a need for more feedback with specific information on how the members of the case could have been more effective in their roles.

Another element of the communication theme was the idea of culture. Within each of the career colleges inside the OPEID of the case study, there was a cultural element to the communication. There was also a cultural element to the communication between the career colleges as well as between the career colleges and the corporate office that set the overall goals and provided support for each of the career colleges within the OPEID. The cultural element of communication was a topic that 66.7% of the participants discussed during their semistructured interviews.

Documentation, another one of the sub-themes, is elemental to the communication theme and its connection to knowledge management is important because it can be a reliable means of creating, maintaining, storing, and transferring knowledge. In situations, such as this case, where there is little opportunity for job shadowing or onboarding and the training opportunities do not meet the expectations of the employees,

documentation is one way to provide operational information that employees require. The participants mentioned that because of the rapid turnover of leadership employees, there were not many opportunities for direct sharing of custom, culture, and concepts, so creating and maintaining documentation is one method of countering the absence of knowledge transfer when there is unexpected turnover in a leadership role. Some of the participants mentioned that the documentation could occur in traditional internal systems such as an in-house database, while other participants shared ideas for alternative types of documentation such as video tapes, binders with written or typed information or a website that incorporates interactive exercises or games as a means of creating a documented list of ideas and tasks that employees who are entering a role need to understand clearly.

The one sub-theme of the communication theme that had more references than any other within the concept of communication was transparency. Transparency had more mentions than the term communication itself. Transparency had more mentions than any other node or subset node with the exception of the a priori node of training, which means that training and transparency are the two themes that came through all of the discussion about the case and how those who were engaged with the organization during the iterative executive succession responded to the circumstances at that time.

Table 9

Emergent Theme 1

	Sources	Percentage	References
Communication	7	58.3%	11
Culture	8	66.7%	14
Feedback	9	75.0%	14
Documentation	7	58.3%	17
Transparency	7	58.3%	21
Total			78

The emergent theme of corporate was the next most frequently referenced among the nodes that came from reviewing the responses to the semistructured interviews. In the context of the case, the employees who worked within this OPEID had believed that as long as they maximized their productivity and were able to achieve the operational goals that the corporate office had set for them, they would be able to continue working in their roles without interruption. There were some events, initiated by the staff members at the corporate office who were responsible for the schools in the OPEID, which caused unexpected and unfortunate interruption in the career paths of the stakeholders who worked within the OPEID. This corporate office was in a different state from the career colleges in the OPEID and did not have consistent communication with the administrators or faculty members at the career colleges. There was somewhat consistent communication with the executive directors, but toward the end of the time frame covering this case study, that communication frequency began to decline. The individuals

who worked at the career colleges in this OPEID understood that they were expected, by the senior leaders in the corporate office, to have better operational outcomes than what were feasible. This is reflected in Table 10 below, which shows the references to corporate at 41.7% of the participants; company (a synonym for corporate in this case) at 25.0% of the participants; and senior management (a partial synonym for corporate in this case) at 41.7% that were all a part of the semistructured interview responses. The subset nodes for corporate: company, turnover, operations, numbers, senior management and performance were present in response to how individuals felt about their ability perform amid the iterative executive turnover.

One additional subset node, turnover, appeared in 25.0% of the participants' interviews. This turnover related to both the individuals working within the career colleges and the individuals working at the corporate home office. In light of the iterative turnover at the campuses during the time period of this case study, it was somewhat unexpected that more participants did not mention turnover during their interviews.

The subset node of numbers appeared in 66.7% of the completed interviews and the subset node of performance appeared in 41.7% of the completed interviews. These two terms were often present in conjunction with each other or almost interchangeably. The individuals who worked at the three career colleges in the OPEID were held accountable to budgeted numbers for enrolling students, collecting financial aid on students, retaining students, graduating students, and insuring that graduates achieved placement in jobs related to their programs. The references to numbers and performance were actually about each career college's ability to meet the budgeted departmental goals set by the senior executive team in the corporate office. The participants shared that they

felt those goals were sometimes higher than what was reasonable and they did not have an opportunity to share their concerns or raise questions with the individuals at the corporate office who had set the goals. The subset note of operations appeared in 33.3% of the completed interviews and is connected to the financial outcomes that came from the number of enrollments that the admissions team achieved and then the percentage of those students whom the education team retained, which led to the amount of Title IV dollars that the financial aid team collected to support the activities within each career college; the combination of enrollment, retention and financial aid collections comprised operations in these career colleges.

Table 10

Emergent Theme 2

	Sources	Percentage	References
Corporate	5	41.7%	12
Company	3	25.0%	4
Turnover	3	25.0%	4
Performance	5	41.7%	9
Numbers	8	66.7%	13
Operations	4	33.3%	13
Senior management	5	41.7%	14
Total			69

Stakeholder engagement or lack thereof is one of the concerns that can result from iterative executive turnover within a career college. The concepts of motivation and

rewards as a subset of engagement came out in the responses from some of the participants as they shared their ideas about the time frame of the case study. More than half of the participants did address the idea of engagement and rewards as shown in Table 11., The theme of engagement has a respondent percentage of 58.3% as does the subset theme of rewards. The ideas ranged from additional time off as a motivator to providing workplace rewards such as outings, lunches, dinners, happy hours, etc. as a means of keeping the participants and their former co-workers engaged in the work that they were doing within their respective career colleges. The subset theme of motivation had the greatest percentage of references at 66.7%. This theme included motivation both from the employer as well as from the students that the participants strived to assist while they worked at the career colleges. In some instances the respondents reported that the rewards of assisting students to achieve their educational goal was enough of a motivation to keep them engaged with the career college in spite of the frustrations or pressures that they experienced as employees in an organization where knowledge transfer was absent during iterative executive turnover.

Table 11

Emergent Theme 3

	Sources	Percentage	References
Engagement	7	58.3%	9
Reward	7	58.3%	9
Motivation	8	66.7%	19
Total			37

The emergent theme of institutional knowledge was included because of the concept of knowledge not transferring when considering Szulanski's theory of sticky knowledge in organizations. In Table 12, the tabulation shows that 25.0% of the respondents discussed institutional knowledge. An additional 33.3% of the respondents mentioned the subset theme of exit interviews as a means of collecting and maintaining institutional knowledge when individuals leave an organization. While this theme and its subset did not have a high percentage of respondents, it is important to consider that some of the participants were not cognizant of the importance of institutional knowledge and methods of collecting it when addressing the overarching research question.

Table 12

Emergent Theme 4

	Sources	Percentage	References
Institutional knowledge	3	25.0%	7
Exit interview	4	33.3%	5
Total			12

Triangulation With Student Satisfaction Surveys

In addition to the responses collected from the participants that provided information about how the executive, administrative and faculty stakeholders were responding to executive succession without knowledge transfer, some data from student satisfaction surveys supplied information on the students' perspective. The career colleges in this OPEID had a student satisfaction survey tool that they deployed at least once annually to meet the requirements of their accrediting body. A copy of the student

satisfaction survey instrument is in Appendix B. The survey instrument contained a Likert scale with values from 1-5, where 1 indicated that the students had rated that area as unsatisfactory and 5 indicated that the students had rated that area as excellent. The career college staff members collected these student satisfaction surveys randomly and anonymously from 154 students in 2013 and from 197 students in 2014.

Because the iterative executive succession could have affected how the administration connected with the students and potentially the quality of the students' overall experience, I compared questions from the student satisfaction survey that reflected those two aspects from a time shortly before the iterative executive transition occurred to a time after the executive transition had begun within the OPEID. Table 13 below shows the survey questions and the percentage of students from each time frame who responded with an answer of 'excellent', evidenced by a score of 5, for the relevant questions.

Table 13

Percentage of Excellent Responses to Student Satisfaction Questions

Question	Percentage of <i>Excellent</i> responses in 2013	Percentage of <i>Excellent</i> responses in 2014
How supportive has the college administration been of your needs?	55.56%	38.07%
How responsive has the college administration been to your needs?	47.71%	38.97%
How satisfied are you with the course and module structure?	55.84%	49.22%
How effectively does the college administration enforce institutional policies?	49.67%	37.70%
How comfortable do you feel discussing any issues with the administration?	48.05%	42.86%
How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your program of study, quality of instruction, and administration of the college combined?	60.93%	39.38%
How would you rate your enthusiasm to recommend the college to a friend or family?	55.63%	41.44%

The comparison between the percentage of students who responded with excellent for the relevant questions on the student satisfaction survey shows that all of the questions have a lower level of satisfaction in 2014 than the level that existed in 2013. This change in responses from student stakeholders appears to represent a decrease in satisfaction that coincided with the iterative changes in executive leadership at the career colleges in the OPEID.

RQ1: How Does the Lack of Knowledge Transfer During Executive Leadership Succession at a Career College Influence Stakeholder Engagement?

The responses to the semistructured interview protocol tool showed that stakeholder engagement was affected by the lack of knowledge transfer during succession. The internal stakeholders, i.e. executive directors, administrators, and faculty members felt that there was a lack of necessary training that would have helped them to be more effective in their roles. Their responses to questions about knowledge transfer indicated that in situations where there was iterative executive leadership succession, these stakeholders would have liked to have more effective communication and greater transparency about the changes in leadership that they were about to experience. The stakeholders also reported having an interest in forming cohesive communities of practice that would have allowed them to share ideas and form bonds that would have provided more information and support as they were moving through the transition phase with executive leaders.

The responses that the participants provided also indicated that while there were not many participants who understood the importance of institutional knowledge, there were stakeholders who were interested in more effective onboarding for new employees

and a plan for shadowing peers and leaders in their roles so that there could be developmental opportunities. Finally, the student stakeholders seemed to have a decrease in their level of satisfaction, which was an indicator of their level of engagement.

In this case study, the impact of the corporate home office involvement created a situation where the stakeholders felt a need for more engagement activities. Because the corporate leadership continued to demand that the stakeholders deliver budgeted outcomes even while their local executive leadership was transitioning, the stakeholders discussed a lack of motivation that was remedied only by interacting with student stakeholders who reminded them of the reasons they had chosen to work in a career college.

RQ2: How Does the Absence of Knowledge Transfer Among Career College Executives Impede Succession in a Career College?

In circumstances where a knowledge transfer protocol that included training, job shadowing and sufficient onboarding did not exist, there were limited opportunities for the individuals who were stakeholders to transfer or ascend into other roles and be fully prepared to execute on those roles immediately. When there were not individuals who had access to the knowledge assets that were needed to be successful in roles that were open, succession became an outsized challenge.

The level of stakeholder engagement that may have declined due to the iterative changes in campus level executives also contributed to a decrease in the initiative to advance into more senior roles. In this case, in particular, the increased demand from the corporate level senior executives to meet and exceed the operational budgets that the

corporate home office generated might have contributed to having fewer candidates who expressed an interest in becoming a part of the succession strategy for a career college.

Summary

The following is a description of my findings in response to the two research questions for this study, which were: How does the lack of knowledge transfer during executive leadership succession at a career college influence stakeholder engagement? How does the absence of knowledge transfer among career college executives impede succession in a career college? The results of the participant responses to the interview instrument as well as my interpretation of those results indicated that the lack of knowledge transfer during executive leadership succession at a career college could have precipitated a significant decrease in employee engagement. The participants in this study responded to the interview instrument with a variety of information indicating that they wanted to do a good job for the student population that they served but felt hindered by a lack of training, communication, and transparency from the corporate headquarters of the career college. The research also showed that the absence of knowledge transfer was highly frustrating at all levels within the career colleges to the administrators and faculty as well as to the executive leaders at the campuses. The people who experienced this turnover mentioned feeling blindsided by the expectations that they faced and consistently pressured to achieve outcomes without the tools required to reach their performance expectations. There was universal support among the participants for both succession planning and a specific knowledge transfer protocol that would have given incoming employees more information on how to approach their job duties.

The semistructured interviews with individuals who were a part of this case where there were iterative changes in the career college executives without any knowledge transfer revealed that there were issues with communication and transparency in these types of situations. The lack of knowledge transfer also created situations where individuals became less engaged with the work that they were doing and felt that need for greater motivational incentive. The stakeholders who worked in this career college situation saw a need for training that would have allowed for their professional development. A big part of that training would have been the ability to shadow others doing similar roles in the organization as well as an opportunity to effectively onboard others who were entering the organization.

The archival information that had previously come from the student stakeholders within the OPEID demonstrated a reduction in satisfaction levels from after there was a change in leadership without knowledge transfer. Every question that addressed the school's administration and how satisfied students were with the service they received had a drop in the percentage of students who gave the school an excellent satisfaction rating after the campus executive turnover occurred. It is not possible to determine specific causality of the decrease in satisfaction. It is feasible to consider the coincidence of a decrease in satisfaction when there was executive turnover without knowledge sharing. This coincidence would appear to support that the student stakeholders as well as the faculty and administrators agreed with the concept of sharing knowledge at the campus executive level to ensure continuity of service and education within a career college.

All of the elements that were lacking might have contributed to an organization with better tools for keeping all stakeholders updated on the information they needed to become and remain proficient in their roles. Maintaining proficiency for faculty, administrators, and executive leaders at the campus level could have potentially provided for more stability within the career college even when there was a change in the campus president role. Chapter 5 addresses the conclusions that I drew from these results as well as how this information might be used to improve management practices in for-profit career college settings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to understand how the absence of knowledge transfer and succession planning can impact stakeholder engagement when a change in executive leadership occurs at a career college. I have taken the exploratory case study research findings and completed an interpretation of what the participants' responses mean in answer to the research questions that I posed at the beginning of this research journey. After interpreting those findings, I describe the limitations that could have an impact on how others view and understand my findings. I also make several recommendations for future research based on the information I gleaned from this research and discuss the implications for social change, the theories within knowledge management, and the practice of both knowledge management and general management. Last, I summarize my research findings and provide written reflections on the totality of my research experience.

I assessed the level of stakeholder engagement through conducting semistructured interviews with executives, administrators, and faculty members. I used the responses from each of the participants to explore what elements of the executive transition without knowledge transfer were especially salient to those who experienced the transition and what different circumstances they would have preferred during their transition experiences.

Although there were three career colleges involved in this study, all three came from the same OPEID number and therefore had some similarities in their administration and personnel. The interviews were conducted with executives, administrators, and faculty members from the three schools within this OPEID. It was important to collect

impressions and understanding from the faculty and administrators because of their exposure to the executive leaders who were responsible for navigating through the executive transition without knowledge transfer. Understanding how the stakeholders responded to executive transition without knowledge transfer is essential in the career college industry because of the impact that this transition can have on the success of students who attend these types of institutions. Additionally, the way that faculty and administrators responded to the executive transition without knowledge transfer could have affected the capacity that the executive leader may have had to understand the communication, policies, and procedures within a given career college.

Gaining insight into the responses that the executives had while transitioning into new roles without the benefit of knowledge transfer is essential for understanding how well those executives felt and believed that they were acclimating to their new roles. This insight was also somewhat illuminating regarding the succession planning that may or may not have been present in career colleges at the executive level. Further, what effect the presence or absence of succession planning might have had on administrative staff and faculty members could have come from understanding more about executive transition without knowledge transfer. Finally, stakeholder impressions of the interaction between executives, administrative staff, and faculty members and students may have more clarity because of the information collected through this study.

Interpretation of Findings

The interview responses from executive directors, administrators, and faculty members indicated that there was an absence of transparency and clear communication during times of executive transition. The participants generally agreed that most

messages from the larger corporate entity outside of the OPEID that included the three schools were not clear and easy for them to understand. The responses to the interview questions showed that there were some messages that the participants believed that the corporate office should have shared but did not reveal. In some situations, the participants indicated that when the corporate office did reveal information or disseminate messages to the individuals at each location within the OPEID, the content of the messages either lacked clarity or arrived too late for the information to be useful. Participants indicated that the absence of transparency resulted in decreased productivity, which was supported in literature related to the importance of communication and transparency in the workplace (Bernstein, 2012).

One area of transparency that many participants commented on was the consistent focus on achieving numeric goals to meet the operational goals of each school. The theme of corporate or the company demanding that a certain number of students enroll and a certain number of students stay in class and then a certain number of students get placed in a job was consistent throughout the responses of several of the participants. While all of the individuals within the OPEID were very well aware of the expectations that connected to numbers and the required performance outcomes, there seemed to be some resentment about the company or the corporate headquarters focusing on those outcomes to the exclusion of all else, particularly insofar as the company did not demonstrate the value of and respect for the knowledge that the individual employees cultivated and demonstrated.

There was also an absence of transparency regarding how the operational goals were devised. The participants indicated that because the goals seemed higher than what

would have been achievable with all knowledge tools available to them, there might have been additional motives for the goals always being set at or beyond the stretch point of performance for the campuses. The participants also indicated that understanding more about the reason for the stretch goals might have created a greater sense of connection to and engagement with the organization. As it was, the participants generally surmised that the outsized goals were solely for the enrichment of the senior executives in the corporate offices and not for the advancement of the participants themselves or to assist the student population that they served. Participants indicated that they would have been more inclined to deliver at a higher standard if they understood why the goals were so high or if they believed that achieving success at the level of the higher goal meant that they would be rewarded either monetarily or with other perquisites from the corporate office. Because there was no clarity about the reasons for the size of the goals and there was no direct correlation between achieving those goals and receiving any benefit beyond simply remaining employed, the participants sensed that the lack of transparency regarding operational goals was not in their best interests and served only the senior executives in the corporate office, which further degraded the sense of engagement that they might have developed with the school.

The absence of transparency contributed to the participants having a sense that knowledge integral to performing their roles was not available for them to consume. The participants also addressed the need for more community with their colleagues. There were several instances of participants mentioning the value that might have been drawn from creating and maintaining a community of practice among their peers. The literature on knowledge transfer and acquisition supports the value of having a community of

practice (Harris, James, & Harris, 2017). Some of the participants expressed frustration with not having sources outside of their campus that could have provided them with advice and support when they had difficulty with achieving the tasks that were required in their jobs.

The literature describes the concept of employee engagement strategies as an integral part of developing and increasing productivity (Kusuma & Sukanya, 2013). The information and/or knowledge that the participants indicated was not available to them included the training elements that the participants believed might have assisted them in becoming more proficient in their roles at the campus level, which had an impact on the level of engagement that the participants felt. Some of the participants were aware that the executive directors had dedicated training that they received at the corporate offices prior to fully engaging in their roles. Of those who were aware of the executive-director-level training, the participants who did not receive that type of training and development from the corporate office expressed chagrin at the lost opportunity for them to be more fully informed and prepared to conduct the duties required in their roles. This knowledge had a further detrimental impact on the engagement level of the participants, according to their responses. The participants indicated that they would have appreciated the knowledge transfer that could have occurred as a result of such role-specific, directed training but were disappointed that it was never offered or even suggested. This disappointment led to a decrease in the participants' sense of engagement with the corporate office and eventually with the campus.

Added to the marked absence of training that was specific to the roles occupied by the participants, there was a recurring theme of the pressure placed upon the people

working at each of the campuses to maintain a high level of productivity even without specific and potentially enhanced training. A review of the productivity and outcome concepts in the literature demonstrated that there has been a significant push for career colleges to show early and consistent profitability (Berry & Worthen, 2012). The participants appeared to agree that the pressure was not coming to them from their coworkers and managers at each campus location; rather, the performance pressure to meet and exceed goals consistently came from the corporate offices that developed the performance expectations and then consistently pushed the teams at the campus locations to deliver on those expectations. In response to the budgeted performance expectations that came from the corporate office, many of the participants indicated that the goals were not realistic or attainable. Their apparent frustration with the goals that the corporate office set for each team was exacerbated because of the absence of knowledge transfer. In the view of the study participants, not only were the goals not attainable, but the training that they received to approach those goals was also inadequate.

Based on the consistent theme of being held accountable to performance numbers and routinely sensing that the goals were not attainable, employee engagement evolved into a significant element of how knowledge transfer can impact the effectiveness and performance of executives, administrators, and faculty members. The participants all shared that they would have been willing to transfer the knowledge they had if an opportunity to do so had been available to them. Most of the participants also indicated that they felt the absence of knowledge being transferred to them did not create a sense of comfort with the subject matter that they worked on. In the majority of the interviews, the participants shared that they would have been more connected to the organization and

more engaged as employees if they had a greater amount of school-related knowledge when initially they started in their roles. The connection between knowledge transfer and the engagement of the employees who participated in this study demonstrated that the schools within this OPEID missed an opportunity to create a deeper connection among the individuals who worked within the school as well as between each individual and his or her commitment to the school and its mission.

A consistent theme that the participants expressed when discussing their preparation for performing the roles that they had within the schools was the need to create better tools for sharing knowledge. In addition to regular communication and meeting with peers and/or managers and subordinates, several of the participants mentioned the value of documentation on previous performance and steps to achieve the desired level of performance. The need for this type of communication is also reflected in literature that addresses the importance of a closely monitored mentoring relationship (Prestia, Dyess, & Sherman, 2014). Many of the participants mentioned that detailed documentation on how to approach their duties was not available when they took over their roles and they had to develop their own tools and approaches as they went along. Some participants mentioned that video recordings of specific processes would have been useful in acclimating themselves to the roles that they stepped into, or in assisting their colleagues who entered new roles in becoming familiar with expectations as quickly as possible. Some or all of the suggestions that the participants made could have become a part of a succession planning effort by the organization. The literature does specifically address the value of succession planning in support of improving outcomes for an organization (Dara & Megharaj, 2014). This lack of specific documentation or video

recording of what needed to occur, in combination with the goals that had been set by the corporate office (which the participants felt were unreasonable), created a decreased level of engagement and commitment to the organization, which reflected the emergent themes of reward and motivation derived from the participant responses. Participants mentioned that they felt undervalued by the organization and were not certain that performance improvements on their part would have made a significant difference in how engaged they became or how appreciated they felt by the senior executives in the corporate headquarters.

The presence or absence of policies and procedures was an additional topic that the participants discussed as a means of understanding the expectations in each role and possessing the tools to deliver on those expectations. In the area of policies and procedures, there were different perspectives based on the type of role that an individual held within the organization. Those individuals who had direct responsibility for academic functions mentioned the presence of requirements that had been written and were monitored by the schools' accrediting bodies. Individuals who were not directly involved with the academic functions had less exposure to concrete policies and procedures that could have provided bright lines for what definitely should or should not have occurred as they executed the tasks that were included in their roles. For some of the participants who worked in the nonacademic areas of the campuses, the absence of policies and procedures in combination with the lack of knowledge transfer from their predecessors to them in preparation for their roles made conducting their requisite tasks more difficult for them. The collection and distribution of policies and procedures that could have been an element of the knowledge transfer for all areas of expertise within

these schools might have decreased frustration with not having the requisite tools to complete tasks that were necessary in each executive, administrative, and faculty role.

One important factor in managing knowledge in the career college setting is the geographical distribution of the human resources in which the knowledge is generated and then stored. Unlike knowledge transition and sharing in situations where most or all employees are on a single campus where the work occurs, career colleges with locations in multiple states or provinces have additional obstacles for knowledge sharing. The participants in this study made several references to corporate or the company or senior management. This indicated that while it may have been possible to maintain knowledge and transfer it properly within a single campus, maintaining a similar standard of knowledge transfer when campuses were spread across multiple locations and/or time zones might have been less feasible for the senior managers at each location as well as for the senior executives at the corporate headquarters. The participants' expressions of distrust and concern about the motives and transparency of the senior managers at the corporate headquarters or the company's ideas of what should or should not have happened indicated that the senior executive leadership of geographically dispersed organizations should have paid closer attention to creating a collaborate environment for employees from various locations within the corporation. Such a collaborative environment, even in the face of no geographical proximity, might have been helpful in creating a setting where knowledge transfer occurred consistently.

In addition to developing settings where knowledge transfer can occur both across locations within the same corporation as well as between each location and the corporate headquarters, institutions with wide geographic distributions should also focus on

engaging employees with different expectations based upon the history, experiences, and regional preferences of the employees in each location. In this study, the participants worked in the Northeast Region of the United States, specifically in Central New Jersey, while the corporate headquarters was on the southeastern coast of Florida. Developing the knowledge management techniques and tools for employees in New Jersey could have required a slightly altered approach relative to what was used with the employees at the corporate headquarters in Florida. The employees in New Jersey indicated a lack of trust in the senior executives from Florida, which might have contributed to a decreased willingness to share the knowledge that they had collected or an increased instinct to hoard or hide knowledge that would have been useful to transfer within their New Jersey locations.

My scan of the research regarding knowledge management, performance outcomes, and employee engagement in preparation for conducting this study presented numerous themes that related to how the movement of knowledge from person to person within an institution can have an effect on the levels of operational productivity as well as the connection and engagement of employees inside that institution. Upon my review of the interview question responses, it was evident that there were several themes in the literature review that also appeared in the interview responses from the participants.

One comment that I heard many of the participants make was that their predecessors did not share knowledge about their roles with them because there was either no available time or no method to do so, which are typical reasons for the stickiness of knowledge (Szulanski, 2003). Once such knowledge became stuck, the participants expressed a concern about their capacity to improve performance through

innovation or understanding of methodologies because the information was not available to them. This is one of the negative effects of knowledge stickiness (Zhang, Qi, Wang, & Pawar, 2017). Relieving knowledge stickiness through the development of a learning culture could produce stronger outcomes for career colleges.

Additionally, the participants discussed the absence of a succession plan, which led to difficulties with transferring and managing knowledge. This was echoed in the research produced by Rodrigues, Borges, & Aleixo, who, in 2014, mentioned that without a specific and explicit succession plan, it can be extremely trying for organizations to develop a knowledge transfer plan for their employees. There is also research that shows in schools that provide education for underserved populations, the absence of a strong succession plan decreases the stability of the institution, which can negatively affect the learning outcomes for the students (Peters-Hawkins, Reed, & Kingsberry, 2017). Because the participants generally expressed a concern for the wellbeing and educational outcomes of the students in these career colleges, their desire for clearly defined succession plans was logical and aligned with the findings of the literature on this topic.

The participants also remarked about the absence of training and their desire for communities of practice in which they could have shared ideas, questions, concerns, etc. The literature indicated that training is an important element for institutions to provide to their employees to increase engagement and demonstrate commitments (Park, Kang, & Kim, 2017). There was also research to support the value of consistent training throughout the tenure of employees to ensure that they are prepared for innovations and changes that might be a part of their job responsibilities (Ocen, Francis, & Angundaru,

2017). The responses from the participants confirmed the importance of training that existed in the literature.

Mentoring as well as sharing knowledge through communities of practice was an additional item that the participants mentioned as absent during their experience. Both of these topics were a part of the literature on sharing knowledge. The information that comes from senior leaders in a community of practice can be especially important for junior employees to absorb (Macpherson & Antonacopoulou, 2013). In addition to collecting resources in a community of practice setting, less senior employees can benefit from a mentoring relationship that delivers institutional knowledge as well as training in soft skills (Curtis & Taylor, 2018). Here, again, the literature supports the themes that the participants raised.

All of the participants addressed their desire to be more engaged and connected to the workplace when they were at the career colleges that were a part of this study. They discussed several measures that could have increased their level of engagement with the organization and the absence of efforts on the part of senior executive leadership at the corporate headquarters to provide those measures. The opportunity for greater engagement may have come from less direct pressure on outcomes and more focus on the wellbeing of employees (Reina, Rogers, Peterson, Byron, & Hom, 2018). The communication that the participants received from their managers when the expected outcomes were not achieved sometimes seemed demeaning and decreased their level of engagement. A less than positive response from employees who received this type of communication was mirrored in the literature on employee engagement. Additional concerns that the participants expressed included not having clarity about how to achieve

the required expectations, which also decreased their level of engagement. This type of engagement decrease was reflected in research conducted by Medlin and Green in 2014. The absence of engagement decreased productivity in the opinions of the study participants.

Table 14

Comparison Between Participants' Responses and Literature Review

Participants' themes	Literature review themes
Predecessors not sharing knowledge	Knowledge stickiness
No plan for succession	Importance of succession planning
Training needs	Continuous training and development
Absence of mentoring	Added value of mentoring
Decreasing employee engagement	Employee engagement and productivity

The participants, while guided by the interview questionnaire to some extent, consistently reinforced the importance of succession planning and communication as a means of maintaining employee engagement when there was iterative executive turnover. Although the participants were clear about the importance of knowledge transfer and their individual willingness to participate in sharing what they knew with any of their potential successors if they had received that opportunity, they expressed frustration with the dearth of opportunities to conduct knowledge sharing within their campus locations. The consensus among the participants, based on their responses, was that the company

missed out on a big opportunity to have employees who were significantly better prepared to do their roles and more engaged because of that preparation.

Limitations of the Study

This study only pertained to the individuals who worked within the single OPEID in Central New Jersey, so the responses that the participants gave may have been under the influence of the geographic distance from the OPEID to the corporate headquarters, which was in southern Florida. The physical distance between the locations where the participants were interacting with students and managing the iterative change in executive leadership and the corporate headquarters that were directing the expected outcomes for each of the locations may have also created some limitations. That distance may have had an impact on the perceptions of transparency and communication that the participants developed.

Some of the responses that the participants gave might have been adjusted from their original impressions and understandings because of the time difference between when they experienced the iterative turnover of senior leaders and the collection of their impressions for this study. This limitation may have had an impact because many of the participants continue to work in the same career field for a different employer and their understanding of how succession and knowledge transfer should occur could have changed through exposure to new systems and processes.

Many of the individuals who were participants in this study have long histories of working in the career college industry, so their understanding of the concepts related to knowledge transfer may be limited based upon the experiences that they had in various career college workplaces. The rapid, iterative nature of changing executive leadership in

this type of institutional environment could appear to be normative for these individuals, which may limit their perspectives and ability to express any ideas, positive or negative, about the nature and importance of knowledge transfer in these situations. For some of the participants, the frustration that came from an absence of knowledge transfer may feel as though it is simply a part of the job within the career college industry, which could have been a limitation on the scale and scope of the issue from their perspective.

A further limitation on the study was the very small community of available participants. Because of the size of the workforce that was present during the time frame of the study when the iterative executive succession was occurring, the number of applicable participants for the study was limited. Additionally, locating participants, who were willing to reflect upon their experiences during the executive succession within the OPEID during that specific time span, was challenging and may have created a somewhat reduced pool of eligible participants. While the individuals who did respond to the interview questions came from various areas of each of the schools within the OPEID, the study may be limited by not having more viewpoints from other disciplines within each location.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Practice

Based upon the general sense that there should have been more transparent communication and a specific training program for individuals entering into new roles, there are several elements of practice that should be included in the requirements for career colleges. Each career college should have a succession plan for at least the executive level employees, and preferably for the administrative level employees as well.

This succession plan should include a formalized training plan for each position on campus with a mentoring component that extends beyond the typical initial employee training period.

The succession plan should also include a method for newer employees to connect with a community of practice immediately upon entering their new roles. The communities of practice should be established across multiple locations and connect employees who operate in similar roles. While the community of practice members may not initially be mentors to the newer employees, they could potentially take on some mentoring tasks to provide additional support for the newer employees. After a new employee becomes fully acclimated to the role, they would still participate in the community of practice, which ensures that knowledge sharing is continuous and the foundation of a learning organization remains in place.

There should be tools and techniques for access to all of the knowledge elements that each individual will need to maximize their productivity and competence in the new role that they enter as a part of the succession plan. Transparency around data and expectations can help individuals in being fully prepared to execute on their job duties. Transparency can also reduce the level of knowledge hoarding and hiding in which more tenured employees are able to engage.

Because many of the for-profit career colleges, upon which this study was based, have a scarcity of time and resources, getting a succession plan that is complete and updated appropriately can be challenging. To ensure that these colleges make a good faith effort to create and maintain succession plans, the recommendation would extend to the accrediting bodies responsible for monitoring career colleges. The accrediting bodies

should require that appropriate succession plans are included in the documentation submitted for any accreditation grant, extension, or renewal.

Recommendations for Further Research

Because there are so few fully developed succession plans currently used in for-profit career schools, it would be helpful to conduct some research on the most effective means of developing a succession plan in the career school setting. It would also be useful to understand how the succession plan might be applied in different circumstances such as retirement, voluntary termination, involuntary termination, transfer, etc. Each of the departure circumstances for an individual who is being succeeded might create different scenarios where the incoming employee has varying levels of access to the predecessor in the role. Research that compares and contrasts several methods for succession plan development and the outcome of execution on those plans could prove to be highly illuminating for career school senior executive leadership. A key element of this research which could make it of greater interest would be to calculate a cost/benefit analysis of having a succession plan or not having one. A step further down that path might be to evaluate the strength of several succession plans and attempt to determine if the cost/benefit analysis changes with the strength of the plan.

Several options are available for onboarding and continuing training as a part of a succession plan or as an ongoing employee engagement approach using professional development. Some additional research that provides insights into what methods for training are most effective in managing knowledge as well as engaging employees and continuing to keep them connected to career schools might also be useful. Based on the opinions that have come from this research, identifying various knowledge transfer

techniques is important for engaging employees at different levels of expertise as well as at various levels in their careers. This research might ask questions regarding the training methodology for transferring the knowledge as well as the initiation of training, the length of training, and the individuals who should be involved in conveying the required information. Generally, career colleges need to look at alternatives to the traditional training methods they have used to be sure that whatever knowledge they do have becomes less sticky and transfers as smoothly as possible to the next individual who needs to leverage that knowledge toward maximizing the effectiveness of the college.

Implications

Significance to Social Change

Access to an educational program that prepares students to work in a field where jobs are readily available is an important part of developing and maintaining economic parity in our society. Career colleges are often the first step on the pathway to a career that provides a middle class standard of living for individuals who come from a family history of unskilled labor. Ensuring that career colleges run smoothly and have the required productivity outcomes to remain in operation is an important part of developing an economic safety net for students who do not have the means or the self-efficacy to complete a baccalaureate program.

In circumstances where there is iterative executive change at a career college, the administrators and faculty members within that college may have difficulty providing the appropriate level and amount of support that students need to successfully complete their career programs. Developing a succession plan that includes a significant focus on knowledge transfer and development of the staff members who interact with the students

could help to reduce disruption in the operation of career colleges, which is important for graduating career college students who can enter the workplace. Training the executives, administrators, and faculty members in creating communities of practice as well as a learning organizations could reduce the incidences of knowledge hoarding and knowledge hiding. If these career colleges become learning organizations for the employees who work within them, including the executive leadership, there is more potential for the executives to have the tools and skills necessary to meet, and potentially exceed, the operational requirements of the career college. When career colleges meet their operational requirements, they remain available for the student population that rely upon them to develop a path toward a career in a field that will allow them to transition and then remain in the middle income range of our society. Because the majority of students who attend career colleges come from lower income households, their access to this type of career education is an integral element of these students achieving and maintaining financial self-sufficiency.

Significance to Theory

One of the two theories that underpin this research is the Wiig model for building and using knowledge. The significance of the information gleaned from this research centers on the importance of transparency and communication when building the knowledge that an organization needs to maximize its productivity. Specifically, as it relates to knowledge building in career colleges, there are several unique approaches to completing tasks that are common to individuals at various locations. If the senior executive leadership of career colleges with multiple sites were to develop a strategy for consistently replicating lessons learned at one location to all of the other locations, then

the process of knowledge building for locations could become codified. Additionally, in a career college setting where several locations conduct business using similar, but not identical processes, the capacity to build knowledge that applies in several locations and then monitor its use could improve outcomes at all locations rather than only at the location where the knowledge originates. For the replication of knowledge that a single site builds to occur, however, there must be increased communication and transparency at the time of the knowledge build. There must also be a focus on updating and renewing the knowledge as employees at each location use and then share the knowledge to provide opportunities for continuous improvement.

The other theory that provided a basis for this study is knowledge stickiness, which posits that once stakeholders acquire knowledge, they are unwilling to share that knowledge with others in the organization even when doing so would benefit all stakeholders in the organization (Szulanski, 2003). The responses from the stakeholders in this research seem to indicate that they would be more than willing to share the knowledge that they have for the benefit of their peers as well as for the organization at large, but there were not sufficient channels available to make that sharing truly feasible within the locations and across the locations. This may indicate that despite an organization's best efforts to create situations and environments where knowledge transfer is encouraged and supported, the employees in some organizations are not always fully aware of the tools and techniques that they can apply to share the knowledge that they have. It is also possible that without a designated stakeholder, who has the responsibility for insuring that knowledge is shared through training, development, and succession planning, organizations are trusting that their stakeholders will readily engage

in knowledge sharing activities. While some stakeholders might be entirely willing to take on knowledge sharing tasks without direction from a specific individual, if the means to do so are not apparent and easily accessible, then knowledge will continue to stick and organizations will not realize all of the benefits that can come from creating a knowledge sharing culture.

A big part of knowledge stickiness comes from the desire that some stakeholders have to hoard or hide knowledge in an effort to protect their position within the organization. Development of a learning organization might be one way to reduce the tendency toward protectiveness of knowledge assets; but in order for that development to occur, it may be necessary to allow the stakeholders to feel secure in their positions. The iterative turnover in the executive role within career colleges decreased or eliminated any sense of job security that many of the employees had within the career colleges where they worked. To decrease knowledge stickiness within organizations, the senior executive leadership may need to consider demonstrating to all employees that a learning organization is one with employment stability where there is some tolerance for mistakes because making and correcting those mistakes is where the learning process can begin for the organization as a whole.

Significance to Practice

Managing knowledge in a setting where there is iterative executive turnover can be challenging for several reasons. The degree of stakeholder engagement can be at risk because those who witness the turnover may or may not begin to feel that their livelihoods are in jeopardy. Stakeholders who remain within an institution might approach their work with a sense of wariness that decreases their willingness to share

knowledge or even basic information with their peers or their managers. One of the ways to increase trust levels and to create an organization that develops and shares knowledge well is to open communication and maintain transparency about the available knowledge within the organization. In some organizations creating and maintaining transparency is more challenging than in others. This can mean that creating a setting where the employees are willing and able to share the knowledge they have gained in a timely fashion should be a part of establishing an institution's value system and defining its culture. If the leadership within an institution has success in developing a knowledge sharing culture from which all employees can learn and grow, the employees are likely to be more engaged with the institution and more productive in meeting its goals.

Several tools are available to senior executives who elect to focus on developing communication and transparency. Some of these tools include developing communities of practice and focusing on creating succession plans that can be applied, then evaluated, and then updated to meet the needs of the organization and its stakeholders. If senior executives within a geographically dispersed organization look at communities of practice and succession planning as an elemental part of building and maintaining the knowledge assets that exist within their organization, they might be able to create a learning organization. Directing their focus to the development of a learning organization could potentially increase the level of engagement for all stakeholders in the organization, which might lead to improved productivity outcomes (Kusuma & Sukanya, 2013).

In career college settings, which often have a wide geographic disbursement of executive talent, such as one campus director or president at each location; the practice of

creating a sense of trust, communication, and transparency between each location and the centralized senior executive team can provide the necessary elements for developing a learning organization that encourages employee engagement. An integral piece of developing learning organizations in career colleges is focusing on the consistent delivery of ongoing training, mentoring, and development for all stakeholders and creating a community of trust that allows those stakeholders to share and transfer the knowledge that they develop within the organization as a consistently expected part of their responsibilities. Until the senior executives who work from corporate headquarters of widely dispersed career college organizations begin to focus on the value of knowledge sharing and transparency, they are likely to continue to face challenges with engaging employees and then maintaining employee engagement within the institution. Without engaged employees, these institutions may encounter ongoing issues with productivity for the business and outcomes for their students.

Conclusions

Career colleges are an important part of our educational system in the United States and they provide an avenue into the middle class for many of our nation's residents. When career colleges create iterative turnover of their executives because the production outcomes are not meeting the expected standard, there is a risk that the number of these educational outlets will decrease and become less available for our population. One of the ways that centralized senior executives, those who are the chief officers of operations, learning, finances, etc. (C-suite executives), make decisions about the viability of these colleges is based upon each location's financial and operational performance. The organization risks losing the knowledge that each local campus

executive has when it creates iterative executive turnover, at any given career college location.

To combat that knowledge loss and reduce the risk that exists for career colleges, the C-suite executives at any organization that manages career colleges should focus on creating a learning organization where knowledge is a freely shared commodity and providing information to individuals from other locations is an accepted and encouraged practice. The C-suite executives should also focus on developing succession plans that are transparent and understood by all stakeholders within the organization. Understanding that a succession plan is in place and that knowledge transfer is included as a part of that succession plan can help stakeholders to remain engaged. Engaged stakeholders will help to reinforce the importance of training and development, communication, and transparency within each career college location, which can and should lead to positive productivity outcomes as well as further development and maintenance of knowledge within career colleges. The American workforce needs career colleges that develop and maintain knowledge about how to educate first generation college students who are looking for a way into the middle class.

Reflections

My expectations of the dissertation process were that it would be fairly straightforward. With the wealth of tools, tutorials and additional avenues of assistance that are available to doctoral students, I thought that it would be somewhat taxing, but mainly a process of following steps that would allow me to pursue my chosen avenue of discovery to cap off my knowledge management studies. I expected that if I followed the instructions that I received from my committee members, and held myself accountable to

realistic timelines, I could put in some hard work and complete the process without much turmoil. I learned that the process could be very different from such oversimplified expectations.

Writing my prospectus became an exercise in rewriting my prospectus because identifying the type of study that I wanted to complete became a much more complex decision than what I had originally anticipated. After several months of trying to clearly understand the prospectus requirements, I was able to get started on the proposal. I enjoyed collecting the literature for my literature review and determining the appropriate theoretical framework for my study. I did not enjoy attempting to anticipate all of the limitations of the study that I planned to undertake and attempting to find ways around those limitations. Collecting my data became a study unto itself in patience and somewhat stilted communication with potential participants. Because my pool of individuals who shared the experience that created this case was so small, identifying appropriate participants and then collecting data took longer than expected.

What I learned from the data that I collected and analyzed provided me with some perspectives that I had not considered before. It was incredibly enlightening to see the issues in my selected case study from various perspectives that I had not previously considered. It was also humbling to understand the impact that the activities of a leader can have on the individuals who work within that leader's organization.

As a long time member of the career college leadership community, I have experienced several situations with iterative executive turnover. This study was an effort to understand how the detrimental effects of that type of turnover can be significantly reduced if not entirely eliminated. Stability in career college leadership is essential for

providing a complete and thorough educational opportunity in these types of institutions. Our nation needs career colleges that function well and produce graduates ready to enter the workforce. Knowledge transfer and succession planning will contribute to the functionality of career colleges. Without highly functioning career colleges, our citizens would have higher unemployment rates for high school graduates, lower wages for the high school graduates who do get jobs and fewer skilled workers to fill the jobs that we have available.

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Appendix A: Conducting Exit Interviews

Exit Interview Questionnaire: Each of the study participants completed the questionnaire below and sent their responses to me prior to responding to the interview questions

Details

Name:

Gender

Nationality

Position:

Level:

Type of contract:

Start and Finish Date:

What Next

What are you going to do?

If employment, who will be your new employer?

If employment, what sort of job and at what level?

If employment, what attracted you to your new job?

If employment, how will your new job differ from your current one?

About the Unit

Do you feel the description of your job in the engagement process was accurate?

Were the purpose and expected results of your position clear throughout your work in the unit?

Could your qualifications, experience, and skills have been used to better advantage?

Do you feel you received appropriate support to enable you to do your job? Was the training you received in the unit adequate to enable you to accomplish your job?

Are there further training opportunities you think the unit should be offering?

What did you see as your promotion and career prospects in the unit?

How might those prospects have been improved?

How was your working environment generally?

Can you list the three most important things that should be done to make the unit more effective in terms of influencing decisions in the organization?

Other

Can you suggest ways improve this questionnaire ?

Signature:

Date:

Interview Tool

The following questions can be used in face-to-face exit interviews to complement or deepen, on a case-by-case basis, the responses made to the exit interview questionnaire.

General

- What was satisfying during your time in the unit? What was frustrating?
- What could you have done better or more?
- What extra responsibility would you have welcomed?

Induction

- Were you inducted adequately for your role(s)?
- What improvement could be made to the way you were inducted for your role(s)?

Training and Development

- How well do you think your training and development needs were assessed and met?
- What training and development did you find helpful and enjoyable?
- What training and development would you have liked or needed that you did not receive and what effect would that have had?

Performance Evaluation

- What can you say about the way your performance was measured and the feedback on your performance results?
- How well do you think the performance and development plan worked for you?
- How would you have changed the expectations (or absence of) that were placed on you? And why?

Communications

- What can you say about communications in the unit? How could these be improved?
- What could you say about communications between the unit and other departments and offices? How could these be improved?

Working Conditions

- How would you describe the culture of the unit?
- What suggestion would you make to improve working conditions?
- What examples of inefficiencies in business processes and procedures in the unit could you point to?
- How could the unit reduce stress levels among employees where stress is an issue?

Management

- What can you say about the way you were managed? On a day-to-day basis? On a month-to-month basis?
- What things did the unit and its management do to make your job more difficult?
- What would you say about how you were motivated and how could that have been improved?
- How could the unit have enabled you to have made better use of your time?

Knowledge Transfer

- What would you consider to be your foremost knowledge assets?
- How might your explicit and tacit knowledge be transferred prior to your departure?
- Would you be happy to take part in a briefing meeting with managers, replacements, successor, and/or colleagues so that we can benefit further from your knowledge prior to your departure?
- What can the unit do to enable you to pass on as much of your knowledge as possible to your replacement or successor prior to your departure?
- How and when would you prefer to pass on your knowledge to your successor?
- Could you introduce (name of successor) to your key contacts before you go?
- How can the unit gather and make better use of the knowledge of employees?

Permission to use "Conducting Exit Interviews"
1 hour ago at 7:34 PM
From

oserrat@adb.org
To

Cyndie Shadow

Cyndie

Yes, you are quite welcome to do so but please cite the source.

Best wishes,

Olivier

-----Cyndie Shadow <cyndie.shadow@waldenu.edu> wrote: -----

=====
To: oserrat@adb.org
From: Cyndie Shadow <cyndie.shadow@waldenu.edu>
Date: 02/17/2017 02:17AM
Subject: Permission to use "Conducting Exit Interviews"
=====

Greetings,

I am a doctoral student at Walden University and would very much like to use the tools you developed in Conducting Exit Interviews for my dissertation entitled: An Exploration of Knowledge Transfer and Career College Executive Succession Planning

With your permission, I would utilize both the pre-interview questionnaire and the exit interview protocol. If you would, please confirm that I have your permission to use these tools in my dissertation, I would be most grateful.

Sincerely,

Cyndie Shadow
Ph.D. student Walden University

Appendix B: Student Questionnaire



Date: _____	Program: _____
Start Date: _____	Campus: _____

Student Satisfaction Survey

Please complete the following survey. Please rate your experience based on a scale of 1 - 5 using the rating scale as follows: the low score is 1 for unsatisfactory and the high score is 5 for excellent. The survey is anonymous, but we request that you provide your program and class start date to assist the college in the evaluation process. Please answer ALL the questions.

- I. Admissions
 - a. How knowledgeable was your Admissions Representative overall about the College, the programs and the admissions requirements?
1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Did the Admissions Representative provide enough current information, including a current College Catalog as part of the admissions process?
1 2 3 4 5
 - c. How thoroughly and accurately do you feel the Admissions Representative explained the programs and services offered by the College?
1 2 3 4 5
 - d. How satisfied are you with your decision to enroll in your program at the College?
1 2 3 4 5
- II. Financial Aid
 - a. Were all tuition and fees sufficiently explained during the financial aid process?
1 2 3 4 5
 - b. How well did the Financial Aid Advisor explain the types of aid available to you?
1 2 3 4 5
 - c. How well did the Financial Aid Advisor explain the difference between a loan and a grant?
1 2 3 4 5
 - d. How well did the Financial Aid Advisor explain your loan repayment obligations?
1 2 3 4 5
 - e. How well did the Financial Aid Advisor explain the terms of the refund policy?
1 2 3 4 5
 - f. How well did the Financial Aid Advisor explain student loan default issues?
1 2 3 4 5
- III. Administration
 - a. How supportive has the College administration been of your needs?
1 2 3 4 5
 - b. How responsive has the College administration been of your needs?
1 2 3 4 5
 - c. How satisfied are you with the course and module structure?
1 2 3 4 5
 - d. How effectively does the College administration enforce institutional policies?
1 2 3 4 5
 - e. How comfortable do you feel discussing any issues with the administration?
1 2 3 4 5
- IV. Career Center
 - a. How satisfied are you with the career center services?
1 2 3 4 5

- a. How supportive has your Career Center Advisor been in regards to your job search preparation? 1 2 3 4 5
- b. Did the Career Center Advisor assist you in preparation for employment, i.e. workshops, job search strategies, resume building, advising? 1 2 3 4 5
- c. How satisfied are you with the overall communication between you and the Career Center? 1 2 3 4 5

V. Faculty

- a. How knowledgeable were your instructors in the subject matter they were teaching? 1 2 3 4 5
- b. How efficient were your instructors at starting and ending class on time? 1 2 3 4 5
- c. Are your instructors sufficiently available before or after class for additional assistance? 1 2 3 4 5
- d. Are you satisfied with the progress reports you receive? 1 2 3 4 5
- e. How comfortable are you discussing questions or concerns with your instructors? 1 2 3 4 5

VI. Instructional Supplies, Equipment and Campus Facility

- a. How would you rate the effectiveness of delivering your course materials, including syllabi, on the first day of class? 1 2 3 4 5
- b. How well were the classrooms and labs supplied for your classes? 1 2 3 4 5
- c. How would you rate the cleanliness and maintenance of the College facility? 1 2 3 4 5
- d. Are the labs for your program sufficiently available for practice and preparation? 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

VII. Overall Experience

- a. How would you rate your overall satisfaction of your program of study, quality of instruction and administration of the College combined? 1 2 3 4 5
- b. How would you rate your enthusiasm to recommend the College to a friend or family member? 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Appendix C: Letter of Invitation to Participate

From: **Travis C. Johnson** brokenglassfilmworks@gmail.com
Subject: Re: Requesting your participation in research study
Date: April 21, 2017 at 3:00 PM
To: Cyndie Shadow cyndieshadow@icloud.com



Thanks Cyndie
Yes , I'm interested in participating

Sent from my iPhone

On Apr 17, 2017, at 4:16 PM, Cyndie Shadow <cyndieshadow@icloud.com> wrote:

Dear Travis,

I hope you are well. I am writing to you to invite you to take part in a research study about rapidly changing executive directors without knowledge transfer in career colleges. I am inviting individuals who were either executive directors, administrators or faculty members from August 2013 through August 2014 at Anthem Institutes in Central New Jersey to be in the study. I am sending you a description of the study now so that you can decide whether participating in this study is of interest to you. This note is the first step in a process of inviting you to be a part of this study.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Cyndie Shadow, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. The study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of Walden University and has an IRB approval number of 04-17-17-0103278. You might already know the researcher as a former colleague or manager, but this study is separate from that role.

The purpose of this study is to explore how rapidly changing executive directors affects the impression that the executive directors, the administrators, the faculty and the students have about the operation of the career college and its outcomes.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

Respond to a questionnaire that take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete

Participate in an interview via UberConference (a free, web-based, video conferencing application) that will last for approximately 60-90 minutes

Review a transcript of your responses to the interview to be sure what I captured is what you meant, which will last for approximately 20-30 minutes roughly 1-2 weeks after the interview has been completed

Please respond to this note to let me know if you are interested in participating in this study.

Thank you,

Cyndie Shadow